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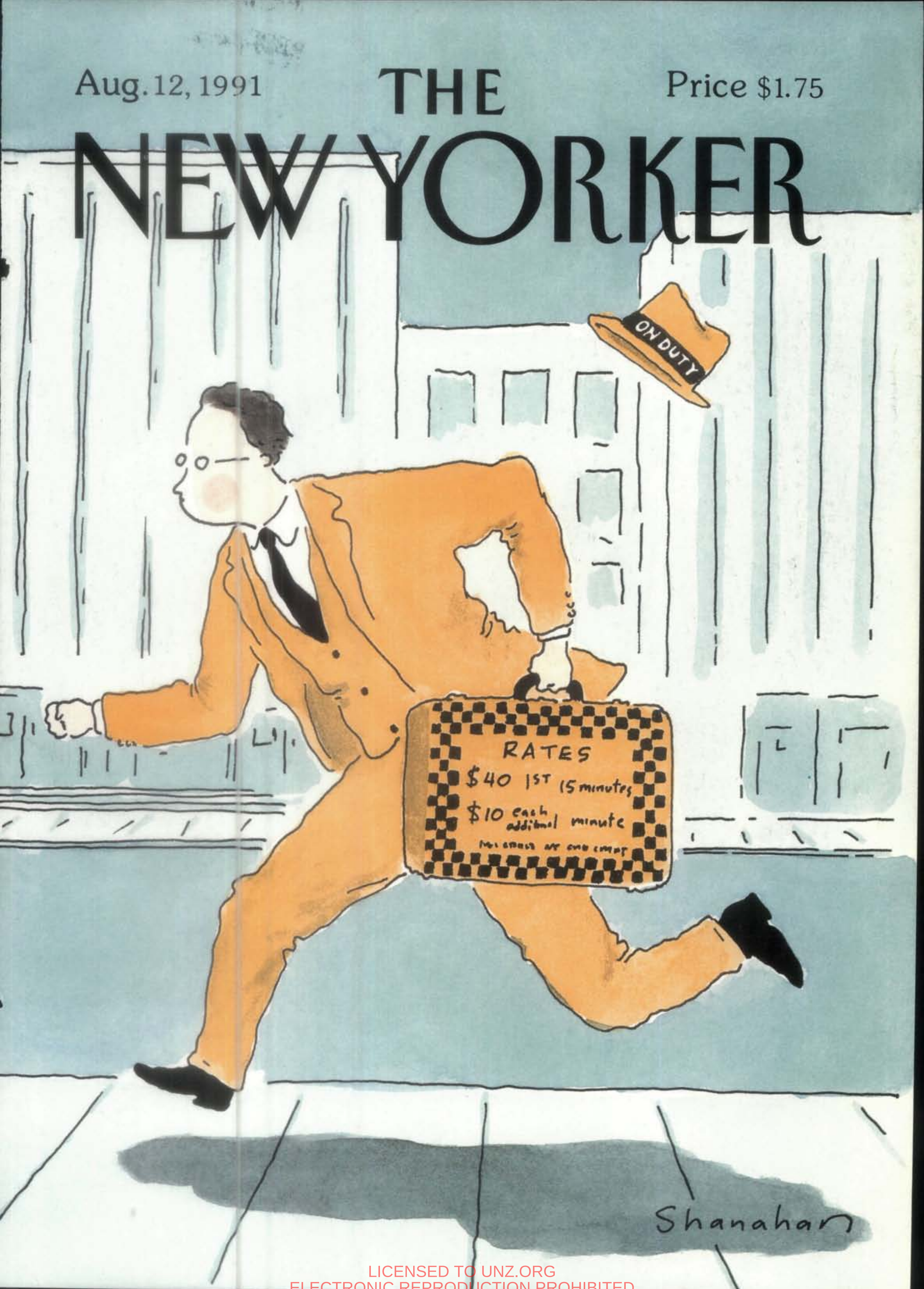
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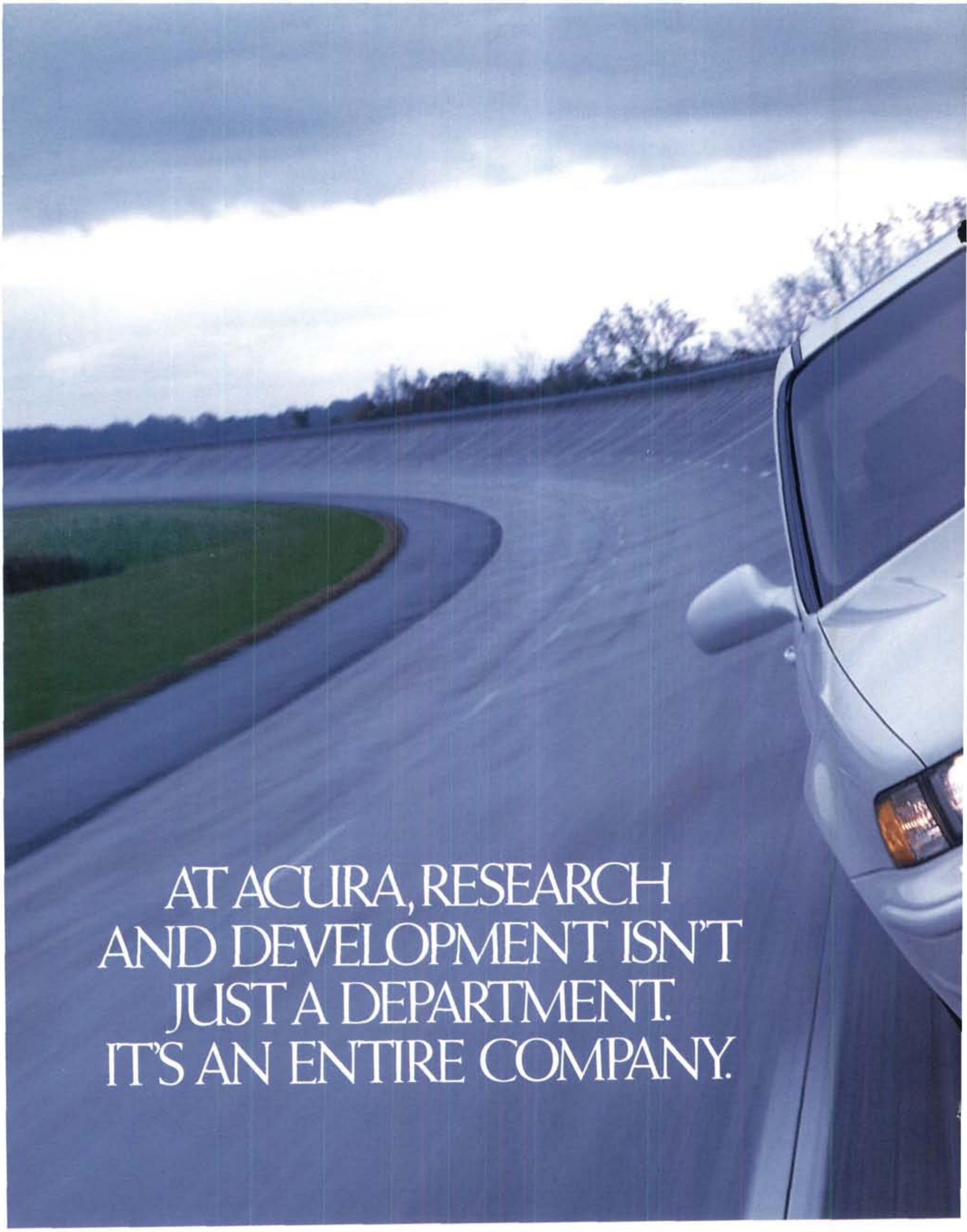
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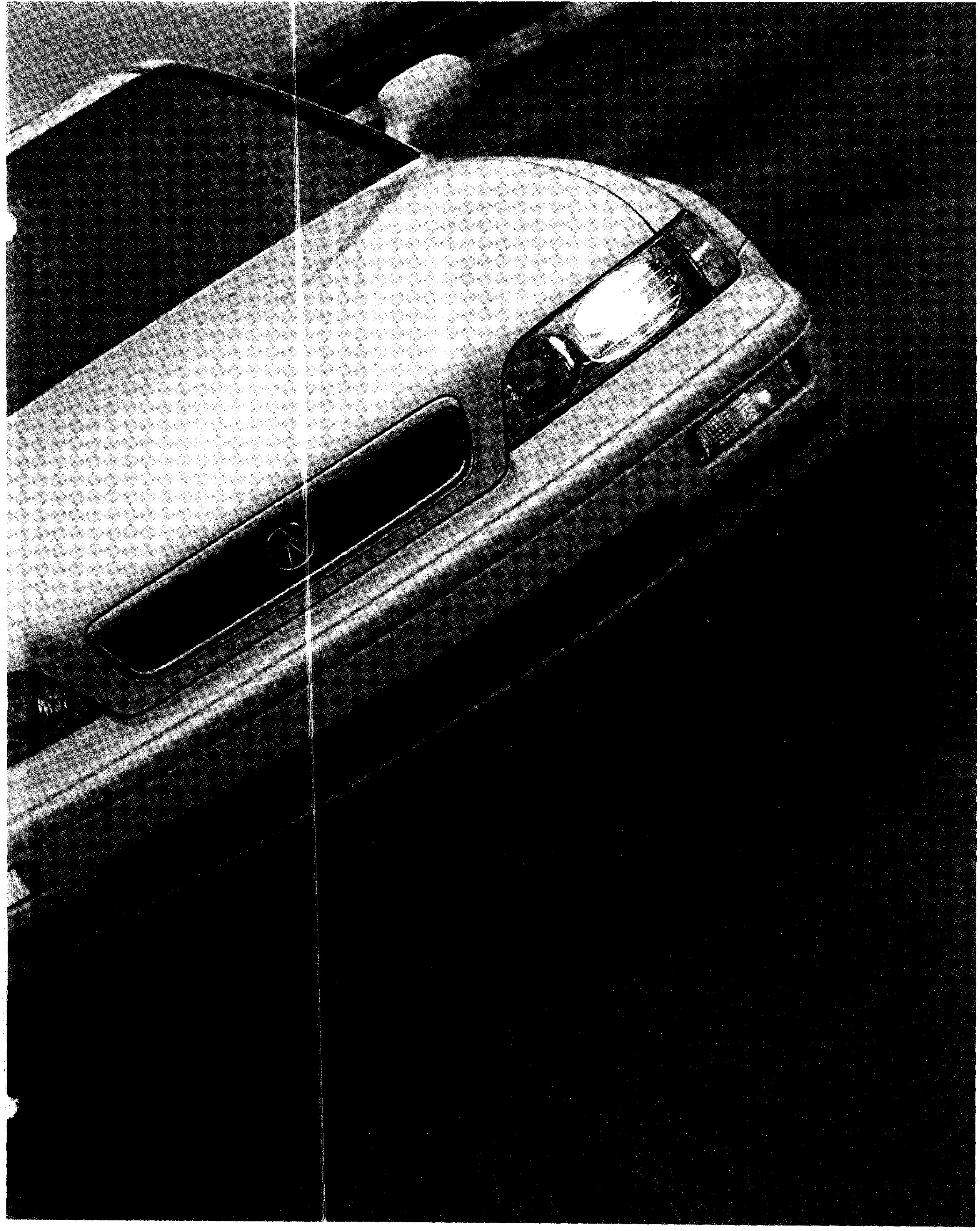

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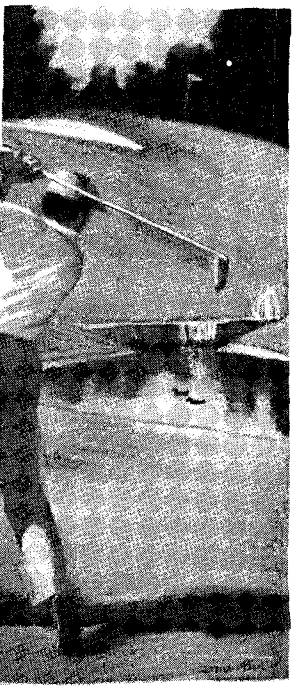

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THE THEATRE

IN one of his "Journées de Lecture" essays, Proust recalls long summer afternoons spent putting up with polite attempts to pull him away from his reading. "No days, perhaps, of all our childhood," he writes, "are ever so fully lived as those that we had regarded as not being lived at all: days spent wholly with a favorite book." We know what he means: during the summer following the fifth grade, we spent almost every morning playing outside but almost every afternoon rebuffing attempts to tear us away from treasured volumes. Unfortunately, our woes did not end once the right to read had been established. Instead, the battle shifted to the books themselves. Our parents wanted us to read Poe and Dickens and Robert Louis Stevenson; we preferred Hardy Boys mysteries. We won, of course, but our willfulness exacted a future price: we recently gave a stack of Hardys to a ten-year-old boy we know, and his mother tells us that he has yet to finish one. There may be more than karma at work here, however. The editions we chose as presents were the revised Hardys, the ones with the stereotypes scrubbed away, and as much as we understand the impulse behind the updating, we have a feeling that some of the stories' liveliness may have been effaced.

The Hardys came to mind the other night as we watched a performance of "Perfect Crime," the long-running murder mystery at Theatre Four (424 West 55th Street). It's a cunning little whodunit, appropriately confusing in the first act, gradually revealing in the second. Catherine Russell gives a sly, tough performance as the lead character, a wealthy Connecticut psychiatrist, and we laughed aloud when James Farrell, playing the cop on the case, rued the fact that his wife hung out at Dunkin' Donuts—"with actors." But we couldn't figure out why we weren't really enjoying the play, until we realized that the Hardy Boys summer was the last time in our life that we had ever had any kind of yearning for the mystery genre. We're not quite certain why the yen slipped away—it would take a Frank or a Joe Hardy to track down the reasons—but we're sure that those who have retained such a taste will thoroughly enjoy "Perfect Crime."

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

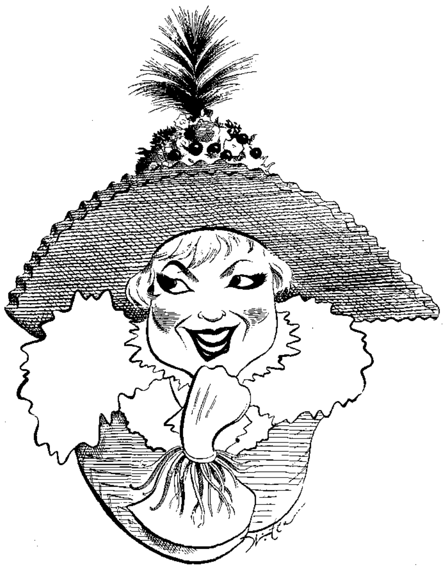
(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for schedule and ticket information.)

THE MATCHMAKER—Dorothy Loudon stars in this production of the Thornton Wilder play. Lonny Price directed. In previews. (Roundabout, 100 E. 17th St. 420-1883.)

OPENED RECENTLY

AND THE WORLD GOES 'ROUND: THE SONGS OF KANDER & EBB—A musical revue, with Joel Blum, Bob Cuccioli, Karen Mason, Terry Burrell, and Karen Ziëmba. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

BODY AND SOUL—David Boldt and Randall Denman have the leads in John Glines' gay romantic comedy. Mr. Glines directed. (Courtyard Playhouse, 39 Grove St. 869-3530.)



Dorothy Loudon in "The Matchmaker"

BREAKING LEGS—The Mafia meets Off Broadway. Philip Bosco and Vincent Gardenia can seldom have been funnier than as a pair of mobsters who back a new play in order to win a young dramatist for Gardenia's daughter. Tom Dulack wrote the comedy; John Tillinger directed it. With Victor Argo, Larry Storch, Nicolas Surovy, and, above all, Sue Giosa as the daughter who spins the plot. (Reviewed in our issue of 6/3/91.) (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

DAMON RUNYON'S TALES OF BROADWAY—A show conceived and performed by John Martello. (Double Image, 15 Vandam St. 924-1120.)

GEORGY—Meghan Duffy stars in a revival of the 1970 musical by George Fischoff (score), Carole Bayer-Sager (lyrics), and Tom Mankiewicz (book). (Wings, 154 Christopher St. 627-2961. Closes Aug. 9.)

GETTING MARRIED—Simon Jones, Scott Wentworth, J. D. Cullum, and Walter Bobbie are the standouts in this spirited production of Shaw's farce about the legal and societal pitfalls of marriage. The play proves surprisingly apt and delightful (though the director, Stephen Porter, seems to have left a first-rate cast entirely to its own devices). New York Shaw doesn't get any better than this. (7/8/91) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200. Closes Aug. 25.)

THE GOOD TIMES ARE KILLING ME—The cartoonist Lynda Barry devised this memory play of words and pop tunes about a racially mixed neighborhood. At the heart of it is the friendship of two little girls, one white, the other black, who are delightfully portrayed by Angela Goethals and Chandra Wilson. The undercurrent of serious comment on race doesn't add much, but every humorous scene scores a bull's-eye. Also with Wendell Pierce and Holly Felton. Mark Brokaw directed. The show was seen this spring at Second Stage. (5/6/91) (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

HOME AND AWAY—A one-man show written and performed by Kevin Kling. Directed by David Esbjornson. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 873-6103. Closes Aug. 10.)

LIPS TOGETHER, TEETH APART—Two couples share a beach house on Fire Island over the Fourth of July weekend, in Terrence McNally's very funny play about a number of serious matters. With Roxanne Hart, Anthony Heald, Nathan Lane, and Deborah Rush; directed by John Tillinger. (7/8/91) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907.)

LOST IN YONKERS—There's not one glimmer of honesty or authenticity in this family melodrama by Neil Simon. Set in Yonkers during the Second World War, it's about what happens when a cowering, pathetic man has to leave his two adolescent sons with his intimidating mother for the better part of a year. (3/11/91) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 221-1211.)

MAMBO MOUTH—John Leguizamo portrays seven Hispanic characters in a one-man show. (Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477. Closes Aug. 25.)

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM—The second of three plays in the New York Shakespeare Festival's free summer series in Central Park. Performed by Brazil's Teatro do Ornitorrinco; in Portuguese. (Delacorte, Central Park near W. 81st St. Closes Aug. 11. For information about tickets, which are required, call 861-7277.)

MISS SAIGON—Oh, the horror! The horror! (4/29/91) (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200.)

PAGEANT—A musical spoof of beauty contests. Book and lyrics by Bill Russell and Frank Kelly and music by Albert Evans. Conceived and directed by Robert Longbottom. (Blue Angel, 321 W. 44th St. 262-3333.)

PENN & TELLER ROT IN HELL—Seen recently on the Great White Way, the dynamic duo are now performing their repertoire of tricks Off Broadway. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 564-8038.)

PROM QUEENS UNCHAINED—A new musical by Larry Goodsight, Keith Herrmann, and Stephen Witkin. (Village Gate, 160 Bleecker St. 475-5120.)

RED SCARE ON SUNSET—If you're in the market for a lot of laughs (and a strange catharsis), you couldn't do better than this latest comedy of manners by the actor/writer/farceur Charles Busch—about a Hollywood personality whose paranoid anti-Stalinist fantasies turn out to be true. With this satire on politics, theatre, and sexuality, Busch creates a showcase for his own subtle talents and those of the actress Julie Halston. (8/5/91) (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 924-8782.)

THE SECRET GARDEN—This lovely musical adaptation of the classic children's story by Frances Hodgson Burnett isn't just a kiddie show. Subtle, charming, intelligent, and wholly literary in its approach to adaptation, it manages both to be faithful to the spirit of the book and to comment on the particular moment in time that produced it. (5/13/91) (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

SONG OF SINGAPORE—A musical with a promising concept: turn a Polish veterans' hall into a Singapore night club, circa 1941, and spill murder and mayhem onto the premises. Unfortunately, the lavish settings (by John Lee Beatty) and the musical talent (led by the winsome and versatile Donna Murphy) cannot conceal a very thin story and a host of excruciatingly bad jokes. Another problem: on a busy night the seating arrangements here can be extremely cramped. (17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. 228-0844.)

THE WILL ROGERS FOLLIES—The sets by Tony Walton, the direction and choreography by Tommy Tune, the costumes by Willa Kim, and the row upon row of Ziegfeld girls make a feast for the eyes, but the funny bone and heart are neglected. Keith Carradine makes an engaging, amusing Rogers, but that is not enough, despite Cy Coleman's pleasant score. (5/13/91) (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 730-8200.)

LONG RUNS

CATS: Some twenty poems about cats by T. S. Eliot, set to music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. A mighty spectacle about mighty little, owing its effectiveness to Trevor Nunn's direction and to John Napier's sets and costumes. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200.). . . **CITY OF ANGELS:** Larry Gelbart, dramatist; Cy Coleman, composer; Billy Byers, arranger; and Michael Blakemore, director, are all in top form in this sharp, jokey musical satire about Hollywood in the forties. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.). . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** The longest-running

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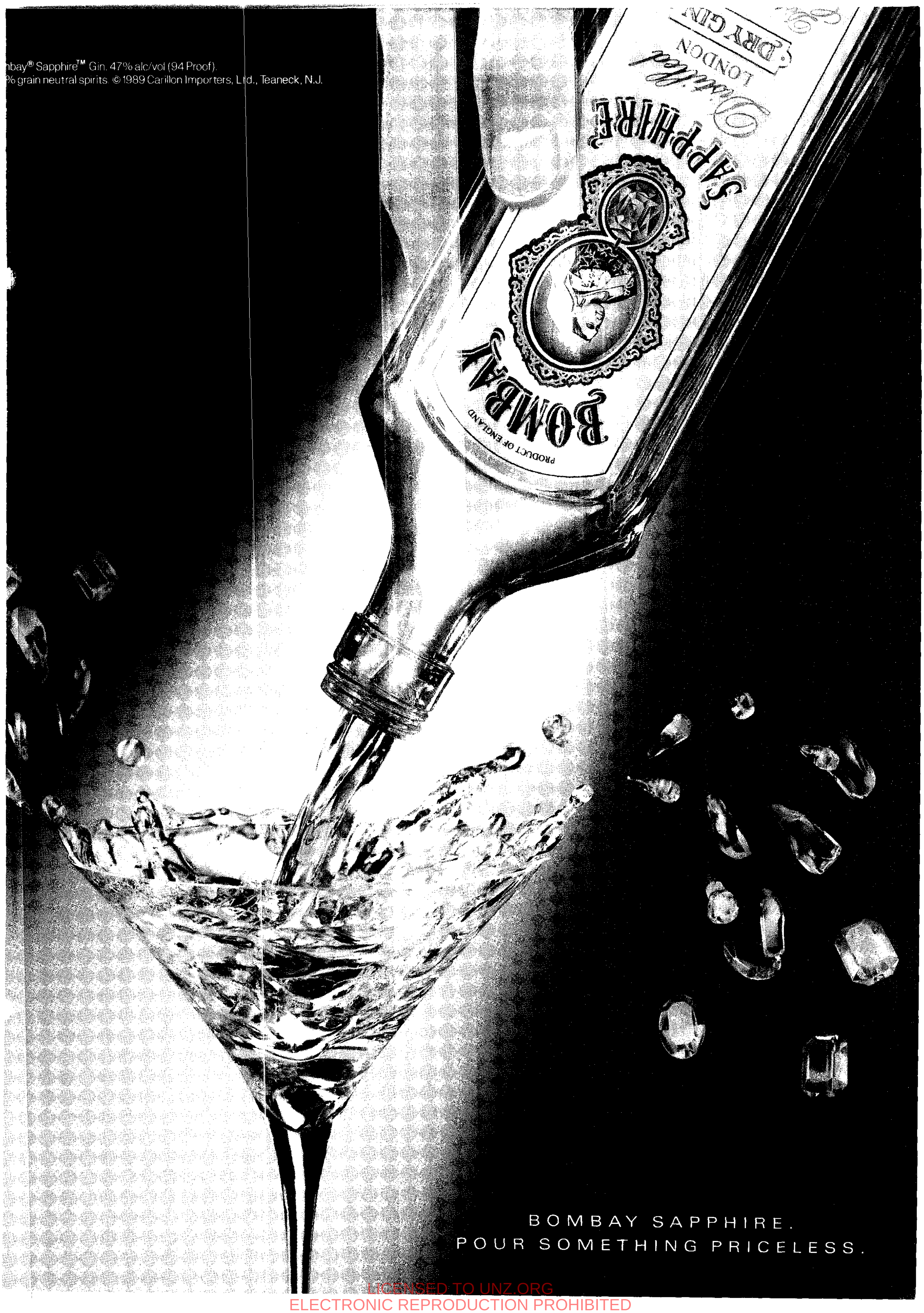
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THE THEATRE-Cont'd

long run turned thirty-one in May. (Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.). . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 1991½:** This newly revised revue is a cluster of parodies of shows along the Great White Way. Gerard Alessandrini conceived and directed it, and wrote the barbed lyrics. (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.). . . **FOREVER PLAID:** Stuart Ross's loving tongue-in-cheek salute to the "guy groups" of the fifties is a real treat. Bring your mom. Hell, bring the whole family. (Steve McGraw's, 158 W. 72nd St. 595-7400.). . . **GRAND HOTEL:** The dazzling imagination of Tommy Tune's direction and choreography and the dazzling scenery by Tony Walton almost make up for the inner vacancy of this show, but not quite. The story and characters are skimpy and the music is undistinguished. Nevertheless, there isn't a boring moment. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.). . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** The stars of this musical adaptation of the Victor Hugo novel are John Napier's settings and David Hersey's lighting. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.). . . **NUNSENSE:** A musical comedy by Dan Goggin. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321.). . . **ONCE ON THIS ISLAND:** An enchanting musical by Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty, which is based on Rosa Guy's 1985 novel, "My Love, My Love." (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.). . . **PERFECT CRIME:** A murder mystery by Warren Manzi. (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 695-3401.). . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** This much ballyhooed Andrew Lloyd Webber musical is fun—if you're not bothered by theatre that cares not a whit for words and contains not one ghost of an idea. Except for the sets, everything about the show is negligible. (Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.). . . **SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION:** You're best off knowing nothing about the John Guare play other than that it represents a perfect meeting of the playwright and the director Jerry Zaks. Out of a true story—one apparently about celebrity and Good Samaritanism—Guare has fashioned a wistful comedy about race, class, money, imagination, collective conscience, individual psyche, and the impulse toward art. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

DANCE

ONE could say that Detroit native Bonnie Sue Stein is now a choreographer and the artistic director of GOH Productions, in New York, but our experience is that the "in" would be figurative. Whenever we've seen Ms. Stein, she's been only making pit stops here between Phileas Fogg-like circumnavigations of the globe. She's interviewed Václav Havel about the arts in Czechoslovakia, she's researched a dance-theatre production about her grandmother in Byelorussia, and she's studied buyo, No, and butoh dancing in Japan. When she tells you that Estonian people are like Tibetans because their solid physicality "gives you the feeling that they've been on earth a lot longer than you and will be here after you go," you take her word for it, as you'd be tempted to do if she made observations about human movement in Hong Kong, Korea, Malaysia, Andorra, Mexico, Australia, Iceland, the countries of the Common Market, or any of the other places on earth where she's touched down.

The subject of Estonia came up during a conversation we recently had with her. We learned that she was about to return there for a third visit at the invitation of the republic's minister of culture, Lepo Sumera, who had once composed a score for a GOH dance work. When she goes to Estonia, Ms. Stein travels with the dancer Marika Blossfeldt, an Estonian native who now lives in New York, where she often choreographs and performs with Ms. Stein. In Estonia, the two women will be setting one of their dance collaborations on a young contemporary dance company.

We would have liked to accompany them on their first Estonian visit, when they brought their dance-theatre collaboration, "Kaleva," to tour the Estonian countryside. As often happens with touring productions, they needed to pick up local performers for subsidiary roles—in this case, they needed a chorus of elderly women who could move in a mildly dancelike way. "We asked to see people," Ms. Stein said, "and the first group of ladies we got were all in their late forties. They were much too young, they looked too sharp, so we sent them away. Then, three matriarchs in their seventies and eighties who had been watching the audition came up and started to sing and move a little. They were perfect." She thought for a moment, then added, "They taught us about their handicrafts and we taught them what we knew." "What was that?" we asked. "Butoh exercises," Ms. Stein said.

SWING SHIFT

The Spuyten Duyvil swing bridge, which crosses the Harlem River at its confluence with the Hudson, is at the moment the best-kept swing bridge in town. In rebuilding the West Side rail line, Amtrak recently spent 14.7 million dollars revamping this three-part turn-of-the-century span, which, like all swing bridges, rotates on its center pier. When boats need to pass, the central segment of the six-hundred-and-ten-foot-long, steel-filigree structure is swung till it's parallel to the shore; after it's reconnected, trains can pass between Manhattan and the Bronx. The low-lying, unpretentious bridge and its slow, methodical motion seem to have changed little since the King Bridge Company, of Cleveland, finished fine-tuning the structure, in 1900, and the scenery, too, looks unspoiled: an underdeveloped stretch of the Palisades lies across the Hudson, green mounds of parkland cover the tips of Manhattan and the Bronx, and black loons dip their beaks into the water as they paddle around the bridge.

The only sign of modernity is the brand-new bridge-operator's cabin, which is supported on trusses halfway across the span. Inside it, Amtrak replaced the original sweat-inducing operating system of levers and cranks with a sleek console dotted with buttons. Now operators can spend most of their shift feeling inspired by the view. "Up here," says the bridge's electrician, Charles Fratinardo, "we're all poets."

IN TOWN

FELD BALLETS/NY—A two-week "preview" engagement. Aug. 5-6, Aug. 9, and Aug. 14, all at 8: "A Footstep of Air," "Clave," "Evoe," and "Skara Brae.". . . ¶ Aug. 7-8, Aug. 10, and Aug. 12, all at 8: "Common Ground," "Endsong," and "The Jig Is Up.". . . ¶ Aug. 10 at 2:30 and Aug. 13 at 8: "Intermezzo No. 1," "Clave," "Evoe," and "Contra Pose." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Through Aug. 17.)

DINIZULU AFRICAN DANCERS, DRUMMERS, AND SINGERS—Presented by the Riverside Park Arts Festival. (Rotunda, W. 79th St., near the Boat Basin. Aug. 10 at 4 and 6. No tickets necessary.)

PILAR RIOJA—In a program of classical Spanish and flamenco dance, including four new works. (Repertorio Español, Gramercy Arts Theatre, 138 E. 27th St. 889-2850. Aug. 12-14 at 8. Through Sept. 2.)

OUT OF TOWN

JACOB'S PILLOW—Zenon Dance Company and Steps Ahead, Aug. 6-10. Zenon will present two works by Danny Buraczeski, "Secular Psalmody" and "Blue on the Moon." Steps Ahead will perform a tap-dance program. . . . ¶ The Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, Aug. 13-17. In "Introduction and Allegro," "Home," "Beyond a Cliff," and "Blues for the Jungle." (Becket, Mass. 1-413 243-0745.)

NIGHT LIFE

ABOUT a year and a half ago, the Buzzcocks turned up at the Ritz for what seemed to be a reunion show (they had split up in 1981). They dutifully ran through their hits, the crowd had a good nostalgic romp, and that, it seemed, was that. But then, the other night at the Academy, the seminal British punk band resurfaced again, this time armed with a clutch of new tunes. Just when we'd thought the foursome were wandering label-less through the pop wilderness, it turns out that they're making a serious stab at a comeback. This doesn't seem implausible: among the bands from the punk era, the Buzzcocks have one of the most durable catalogues. There's more to their music than bar chords and attitude—lead singer Pete Shelley is a real songwriter, even something of a stylist. Though the Buzzcocks adhere to punk's non-virtuoso ethic, they tinker with structure, melody, and harmony. True, they can shake up a roomful of skinheads as well as anyone, but one of their biggest hits, "Ever Fallen in Love," is a romantic pop song in punk camouflage (just listen to the Fine Young Cannibals' sultry lounge version).

The crowd at the Academy fell mostly into two camps: time-mellowed Ur-Buzzcocks fans and a new generation of Statue of Liberty-spiked stage-divers, who tested the band's punk credentials by jumping onstage, grabbing mikes, and pogo-ing with the musicians (the bouncers were strangely laissez-faire). The band members were good sports, though Shelley looked a little pained at times. Most of the frenzy, of course, came during old numbers. A more polite—perhaps nonplussed—response greeted the new material, some of which was characteristic and some of which was more surprising, veering off in directions that recalled Shelley's solo work. The show left us hoping that the band plans to spend time in a studio soon.

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type is used to pick out a few of the more notable performers in town. . . . ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead.)

Arthur's Tavern, 57 Grove St. (675-6879)—A quirky, endearing Village watering hole, perpetually decorated for the holidays—all of them. The musicians work in the back of the room, in a well ringed by a bar—a setup that seems to bring out the latent show-biz tendencies in some of the bar's patrons. Mondays belong to the Grove Street Stompers, Tuesdays through Thursdays to Al Bundy, Fridays and Saturdays to Mabel Godwin, and Sundays to Lee Lorenz and the Creole Cookin' Jazz Band. Music from nine-thirty.

Ballroom, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—A tony cabaret attained by passing through an opulent tapas restaurant, where wicker baskets overflow with fruit and vegetables and a row of hams hangs over the bar; if you haven't had dinner, you may never make it to the show. The **WISEGUYS** wrap up their engagement on Aug. 9. The trio of swinging Texans write many of their own songs, including such irreverent numbers as "Hurt Someone's Feelings Today." Pam Tate begins a five-night run on Aug. 13. Shows Tuesdays through Thursdays at nine, Fridays and Saturdays at nine and eleven-fifteen.

Bitter End, 149 Bleecker St. (673-7030)—For the price of a drink or two, you can catch a handful of bands here any night of the week. (The cover charge is mostly a formality—walk along Bleecker Street and you're sure to have a free pass handed to you.) In the old days, as a mural behind the bar attests, the club hosted the likes of Bob Dylan, Linda Ronstadt, and Joni Mitchell. Now you're not likely to recognize anyone onstage unless you went to high school with them. Music from eight-thirty Sundays through Thursdays, and from nine on Fridays and Saturdays.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—A jazz club that would be a perfect stop on a bus tour (there's even a souvenir shop that sells Kodak). It's a good idea to make a reservation and show up well in advance. Quartets led by pianist **MICHEL PETRUCCIANI** and bassist **EDDIE GOMEZ** share the bandstand Aug. 6-11. **GIL SCOTT-HERON** and **AMNESIA EXPRESS** begin their final gig together here on Aug. 13. First set at nine. Dining.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—There probably isn't a club in the city that's more devoted to songwriters and their songs. This week's performers include country kingfish **TOWNES VAN ZANDT,** who'll be sharing the stage with **JIMMIE DALE GILMORE** on Aug. 6. **DONOVAN** comes in on Aug. 7. The Scottish-born singer began his career as a Dylan imitator, then turned flower child to end all flower children. He did the mystic thing; he did the recluse thing; he wrote "Mellow Yellow," "Sunshine Superman," "Season of the Witch," and an operetta titled "7-Tease" (read: seventies). He also pitched in on "Yellow Submarine," if we're not mistaken. Lately, Donovan's name has remained in print, if for no other reason than that he is the father of actress Ione Skye (read: 'I Own the Sky.") **DAVE KOZ** and **PHIL PERRY** share a bill on Aug. 8, and **AL STEWART** appears on Aug. 9. Shows at eight and eleven. Burgers, fries, and other things to make your heart beat faster.

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—A neighborhood bar in the heart of N.Y.U. country. It's advisable to get all your talking done between sets, because once the first chord is struck the audience here—with a little help from the management—becomes as quiet as a church congregation. The trio of David Williams, Cedar Walton, and Billy Higgins plays here through Aug. 10. Buster Williams, Mulgrew Miller, and Greg Hutchinson move in for a week beginning on Aug. 12. Music from nine-forty-five. Dining.

Cat Club, 76 E. 13th St. (505-0090)—Bell-bottoms and peace signs aren't the only nostalgia craze in town: at the Cat Club on Sunday nights, the nineteen-thirties are in vogue. On other nights of the week, the club attracts a scruffy leather-and-lace crowd, but Sundays belong to the Swing Dance Society, whose passion is the Lindy Hop, a dance named after Charles Lindbergh. The dancers are young and old, graceful and flat-footed; the drink of choice is the Swing Dance Punch; the staff looks alternately bemused and bewildered by the genteel crowd. The **RAY ABRAMS** big band leads the proceedings on Aug. 18. Music from eight to midnight.

CBGB & OMFUG, 315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—Still standing. Singer-guitarist **LUKA BLOOM,** who'll be playing here on Aug. 8, has a new record due in September. His first offering, titled "Riverside," was a fine, spare record—a sort of Irishman's "Nebraska." Bloom's songs are mostly about blood's being thicker than water and love's being thicker than anything. In concert, he also works in a jubilant cover of the Waterboys' "This Is the Sea" and a half-campy, half-earnest rendition of L.L. Cool J's "I Need Love," which he's recorded for the new album. Bloom has quite a cult following in these parts, and his shows are almost always packed to the rafters. Aug. 12 belongs to Body Count. Music from nine-thirty Sundays through Thursdays and from ten-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays.

Condon's, 117 E. 15th St. (254-0960)—Jazz clubs aren't always known for their romantic atmosphere, and Condon's earns higher marks than most. It's a low-ceilinged basement establishment, with lemon walls and abundant candlelight. They rearranged the furniture here a while back, so that now a greater number of people look at the stage rather than at a pole. **LEW TABACKIN'S** quartet holds forth Aug. 6-11; the **HARRY (SWEETS) EDISON ALL-STAR QUINTET** begins work on Aug. 13. Music after nine.

Continental Divide, 25 Third Ave, at St. Marks Pl. (529-6924)—Hipsters, posers, N.Y.U. students, the occasional skinhead—a typical East Village bar. The motif is prehistoric punk—a Stone Age mural, assorted toy dinosaurs and pterodactyls—and on peak nights there's a take-no-prisoners atmosphere. Shows Sundays through Thursdays at ten, Fridays and Saturdays at eleven.

Delta 88, 332 Eighth Ave., at 26th St. (924-3499)—Feels like home; not your home, but somebody's. The restaurant-and-bar is a cluttered junk shop of a place, where the walls are filled with redneck iconography, the waiters and waitresses scurry around with such things as chicken-fried steak, and some jumpy young band or other is always stomping around onstage. The a-cappella outfit known as the **PERSUASIONS,** who will perform here on Aug. 6, are elder statesmen of cool: they formed in the late sixties on a sandlot in Brooklyn and went on to prominence as keepers of the doo-wop flame. Today, the Persuasions sing in an easy, street-corner fashion. Shows after nine.

Diva, 306 E. 81st St. (650-1928)—A newly hatched restaurant-and-piano-bar. It's a modest-sized, brick-walled room that offers Italian fare and, Tuesdays through Saturdays, the musings of pianist **CHARLES DE FOREST.** Music from eight-thirty. Closed Sundays.

Duplex, 61 Christopher St., at Seventh Ave. (255-5438)—A two-floor entertainment center. The cheery white downstairs bar has French windows giving on to the bustle of Seventh Avenue, but the real clamor is indoors. Everyone is a star here—the pianist, the bartender, the waiters and waitresses, and the audience. Pop standards are sung/shouted, usually with altered, risqué lyrics; wisecracks are fired across the room; and everyone laughs too hard. Upstairs, there's a quieter bar and a cabaret, where you'll find a variety of performers nightly.

Eagle Tavern, 355 W. 14th St. (924-0275)—An Irish pub in the meat-packing district, not too far from the boondocks. In the front room, barbirds study the TV. and grumble about one thing or another, and in the back room another crowd listens to Irish folk musicians (on Fridays). Music from nine.

Fat Tuesday's, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7902)—The seating arrangement in this long, narrow, red-velvet-and-mirror-walled basement makes flying coach seem roomy; nevertheless, it's one of the city's top jazz spots—thanks largely to the club's talent bookers. But watch your head. The princely composer-conductor **BUCK CLAYTON,** who originally made his name as a trumpeter, leads his swing band through Aug. 11; **HELEN MERRILL** begins a week-long engagement on Aug. 13. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor **LES PAUL** leads a trio. Music from eight. Dining.

Kilimanjaro, 531 W. 19th St. (627-2333)—From the outside, this club, which is housed in a long, low brick building in deserted far-west Chelsea, looks like either a bowling alley or an automobile showroom, but inside you'll find all sorts of African music, as well as calypso, reggae, and other world-beat stuff. Music from eleven-thirty.

Knitting Factory, 47 E. Houston St., near Mulberry St. (219-3055)—Situated in a neighborhood that boasts the Puck Building to the west and a host of windshield washers to the east, this modest space provides a forum for free-thinking musicians. Beat and melody are optional, "music" and "noise" relative terms. A few highlights: the **PAUL MOTIAN** trio, with **BILL FRISELL** and **JOE LOVANO,** Aug. 8-10; Michael Formanek and Wide Open Spaces on Aug. 11; Co/Motion and Ropes of Sand on Aug. 12. Music after nine.

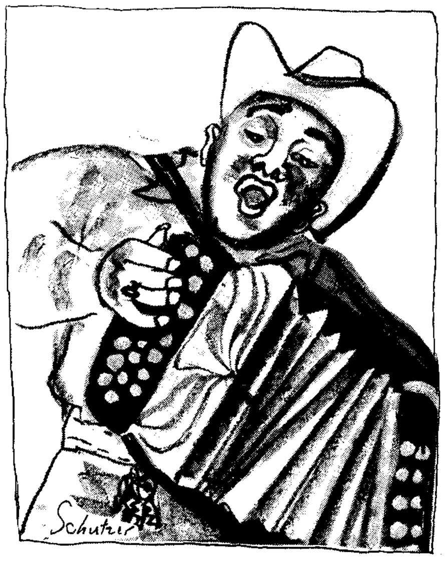
Lone Star Roadhouse, 240 W. 52nd St. (245-2950)—It's named for its Texas décor, but perhaps a more apt name would be the Second Chance, since so many lost, faded, or forgotten rockers turn up here. The **NITTY GRITTY DIRT BAND** claims Aug. 8; **SPENCER DAVIS,** the British R. & B. man whose eponymous group (with Stevie Winwood) had some mega-hits in the sixties, is here on Aug. 9; and the great, veteran blues belter **ETTA JAMES** performs Aug. 13-14. Music after nine. Dining.

Marquee, 547 W. 21st St. (929-3257)—The current front-runner on the alternative-music scene. Aug. 7: Mr. Big and the Lost. Aug. 9: The Samples and Bim Skala Bim. Aug. 14: The **DAN REED NETWORK.**

Michael's Pub, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—A midtown restaurant and jazz lair for the tasselled-loafers set. **TERRY WALDO** and his outfit are currently in residence, offering a show of old-time "bordello music." Shows Tuesdays through Saturdays at nine-fifteen and eleven-fifteen. Closed Sundays.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza. (632-5000)—A great, pricey cabaret in the sky. Currently underway is a centennial tribute to Cole Porter, called "What a Swell Party!" The vocalists—individually distinctive and adding up to a fine ensemble—are **MARY CLEERE HARAN, TERRI KLAUSNER,** and **HELEN SCHNEIDER;** the pianists are **BRUCE W. COYLE** and **RONNY WHYTE** (both contributing to the vocal forces as well). Shows from nine. Dining. Closed Sundays and Mondays.

Red Blazer Too, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—It may look like a plain old steakhouse, and the photos on the walls may look like Sardi's leftovers, but in the back room you'll find swing bands, Dixieland combos, and couples sprung from the legacy of Fred and Ginger. Mondays belong to Howie Wyeth's Rag Time Trio, and Tuesdays are the property of **VINCE GIORDANO AND THE NIGHTHAWKS,** a band that relies on period instruments, old-fashioned felt-bannered music stands, and original-score arrangements to re-create the look and sound of a thirties swing outfit. Fridays are given over to Sam Ulano and his Dixielanders, and Saturdays to Bob Cantwell and his Stompers. On Aug. 7 the Bob Litwack Group performs, with clarinettist Ken Peplowski and trumpeter Spanky Davis; the KLM Jazz Band (from Holland) holds forth on Aug. 8; and the Michael Bergman band supplies the tunes on Aug. 14. Show times vary.



Boozoo Chavis at Tramps

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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Rodeo Bar, 375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (683-6500)—A Western theme bar, attached to a Mexican restaurant. You get walls designed to simulate a log cabin; a buffalo head that blows smoke through its nostrils; a horse trailer that's been converted into a bar; peanuts for eating and, occasionally, throwing. And there's more: a TV that plays tapes of rodeos, New Mexico memorabilia, and live music nightly—country, blues, folk, rock, hillbilly. Shows from ten-thirty.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—An itinerary stop for the international jazz groupies who, on any given night, can be seen roaming the streets of the Village. Up front, there's a glass-enclosed sidewalk café; in back is a larger room, with a pressed-tin ceiling, red brick, and more pinewood than a ski lodge. **RICHARD DAVIS** and some notable friends, including **ROLAND HANNA,** are in session through Aug. 11; **PAUL BLEY, JIMMY GIUFFRE,** and **GARY PEACOCK** begin work on Aug. 13. An electrified big band belonging to trumpeter Miles Evans is in action on Mondays. Tee-off time is ten. Dining.

Sweetwaters, 170 Amsterdam Ave., at 67th St. (873-4100)—Pink carnations on the tables, shrimp creole on the menu, and a sunken dance floor with a circa-1975 disco ball. The stage, dominated by a white grand piano, is usually given over to soul and R. & B. acts. **NOEL POINTER,** a versatile jazz violinist, pianist, and singer, is on the premises Aug. 8-9. Shows at nine and eleven.

Tramps, 45 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—This roller-rink-size bar-and-restaurant is a lot bigger and a lot slicker than the old Tramps, but the emphasis on solid rock and blues remains. **BLIND LEMON PEEL** performs on Aug. 6, and Neal Black and the Preachers appear on Aug. 7, sharing the bill with the Longshadows. **BOOZOO CHAVIS,** who'll be here Aug. 8-9, started making zydeco records nearly forty years ago, yet he has only recently had his major-label début, with a self-titled album that includes "Boozoo's Theme Song" and "Don't Worry About Boozoo." "I'm not bragging for myself," Chavis said recently, "but this style of music what I got, it's gonna make you dance. It's definitely gonna make you dance." Music from eight on weeknights and from eight-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The late Max Gordon, who opened this holiest of jazz shrines in 1935, once described the club's early patrons as a mix of "poets, W.P.A. writers, hustlers, broads on the make, and moochers." The **ED BLACKWELL PROJECT** is here through Aug. 11, and the **HARPER BROTHERS** start a week-long gig on Aug. 13. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays. Music after nine-thirty.

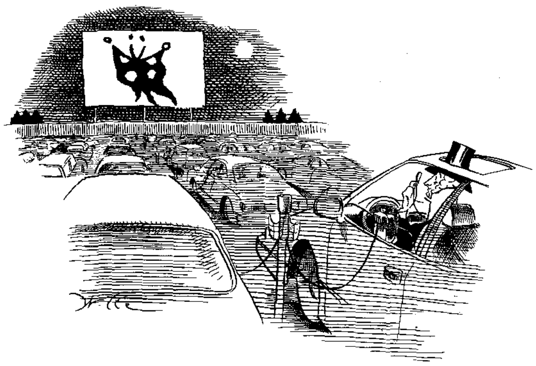
Wetlands, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Two floors of no-nuke veggie entertainment and consciousness-raising. Listen to bands play in the Summer of Love-muralled back room; buy a tie-dyed T-shirt at the Volkswagen-bus curio shop; catch up on current events at the bulletin board and community calendar. Or, if you'd rather just be mellow, crash out in the basement hippie love pad. The **SPIN DOCTORS,** a Dead-like jam band, are here Aug. 8-9. Shows from ten.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—One of those snazzy, awninged eateries you've seen nestled amid brownstones in the Village and always wondered about. The **PETE MALINVERNI** trio is here through Aug. 10. Music from eight. Closed Sundays.

EDGE OF NIGHT LIFE

NATURE has few more lustrously sensual and ethereal effects than the full summer moon illuminating the seascape at low tide. Big diamonds by the yard dapple the lush swells of the ocean, waves shimmer with each crash, and each nail in the boardwalk seems to have fallen out of a jewelry box. The platinum light reveals all in eerily beautiful monochrome, promising sorcery for the seducible, reminding sailors to expect magic, urging beach bums to go for broke, and whispering to Harlequin-romance readers that this is the night.

Funny, how seasonally transplanted urban dwellers, walking alone across dunes or under the natural arches of foliage, awash in this half-lit wonderment, often hear a different message. For them, it's a night for Hitchcock to appear, for Hannibal Lecter to step out of the cranberry bog, or for Jason to come up from behind, brandishing the very knife you used to split open the mesquite-grilled Cornish hens. City kids don't *want* to think this way. They long to succumb to all the unspoiled, barely civilized paradise they paid through the nose for, but their dead-bolt police locks have been replaced with screen doors, and, though they insist they're only buying the paper to check for sales at the nursery, they furtively turn to page 3 with its tales of Milwaukee and Central Park. One of the reasons the summer sky can seem so vast is that peripheral vision has become so acute. It's not that lone beachcombers have forgotten that there's safety in numbers. It's just that no one will admit how scary moonlit nights can be. "I must go down to the sea again," they'll tell you when you come for a visit. "Wait till you see the moon." If you really want to be kind, bring a battery-operated night-light as a housewarming present. However, if you want to have some fun, pop a tape of "Halloween" in the VCR, and then suggest a full-moon-lit swim. Last one in is a dead man.



IN ANOTHER CATEGORY—PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

"Franklin Furnace's Asylum at the Anchorage"—A series of performance works curated by Franklin Furnace's director, Martha Wilson, and performed at the Brooklyn Bridge Anchorage. Aug. 8-9: Linda Carmella Sibio in "W. Va. Schizophrenic Blues," a three-and-a-half-hour-long performance piece about mental illness. . . . ¶ Aug. 10: "Bob Flanagan's SICK," a performance piece that the press material describes as "not for the faint of heart." (Cadman Plaza West and Old Front St., Brooklyn. Evenings at 8. For reservations, call 619-1955. The series continues through Aug. 17.)

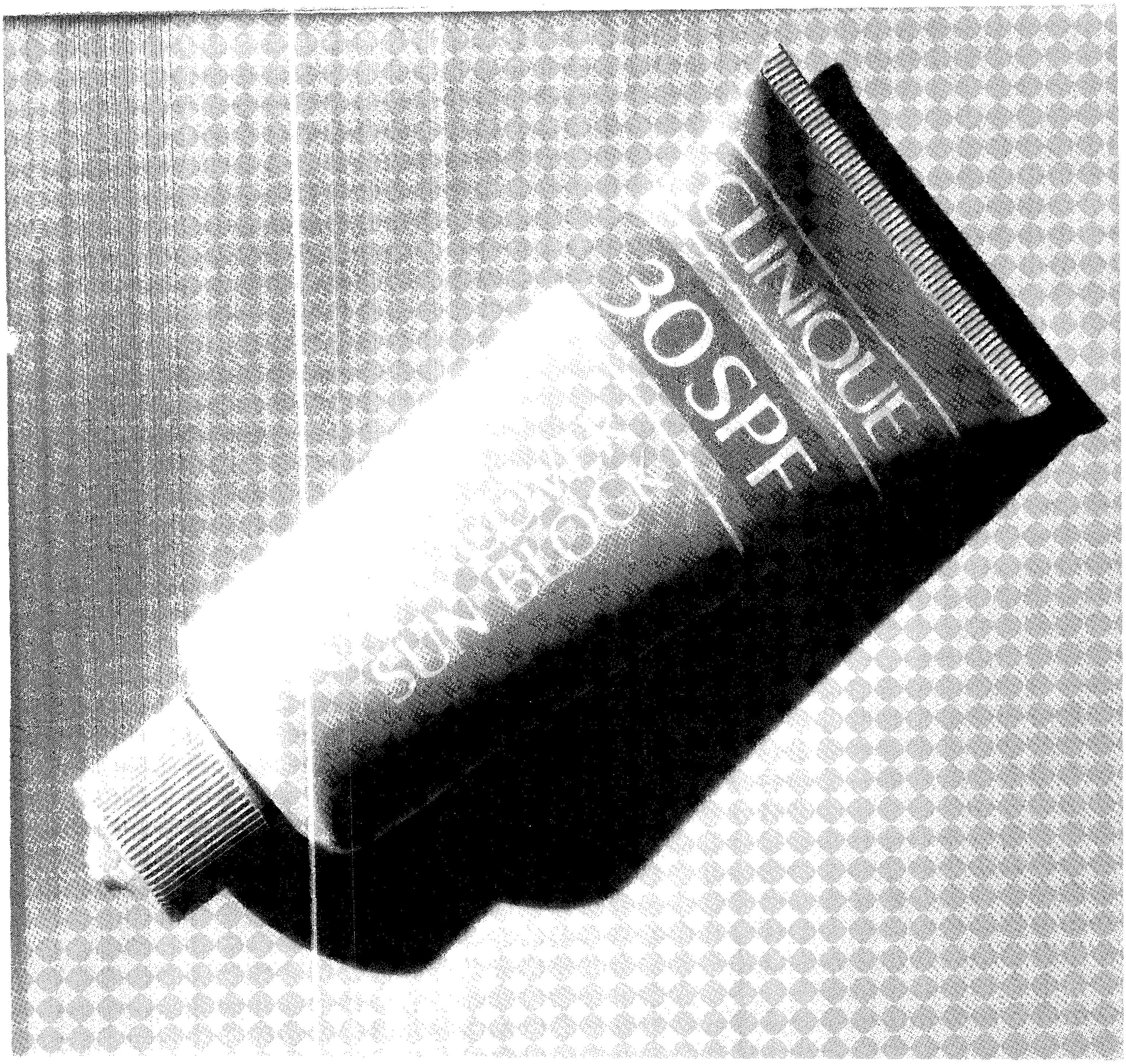
ART

SINCE Janine Cirincione became its director, the Jack Tilton gallery—which metamorphosed from the former Betty Parsons gallery—has become one of the pithiest group-show venues in town (24 West 57th Street). Together with a couple of other youngish, smallish enterprises—the Shainman and Klagsbrun galleries, for instance—it has introduced New Yorkers to the mock-mingy joys of the new Belgian conceptualism, as practiced by artists such as Guillaume Bijl, Wim Delvoye, Leo Copers, and the bombastic Jack-of-all-arts Jan Fabre, while also helping to settle the generational debt to the late Belgian bibliophile and bon vivant Marcel Broodthaers. Broodthaers' influence today probably rivals that of the other chess-playing Marcel—the acid Duchamp—for he seems to have left his systematically deadpan, loopy, lyrical mark on a spectrum of artists, ranging from the British filmmaker Peter Greenaway to such arch-American acerbs as Richard Prince and the neophytes Nayland Blake, Jessica Diamond, and Fred Wilson. At times, we've wondered whether half the installation pieces on view in the past six months—from those in the galleries of New York City to "Places with a Past," this summer's site-specific exhibition spread throughout historic Charleston, South Carolina—don't owe something to Broodthaers' strange blend of sentiment and iconoclasm.

Cirincione's current group show, on view through August 23, is called "When Objects Dream and Talk in Their Sleep." The title was taken from an essay by the Surrealist Tristan Tzara, and most of the objects and installations lounging around the gallery have the poetic-prosaic, straight-from-the-attic-of-the-mind lilt that conjures Broodthaers. Karen Kilimnik's "Castle Gloom," for instance, is a scatter piece that suggests the ruins of a romance novel set in Scotland, told, seemingly, from the point of view of a latter-day, sixteen-year-old suburban Brontë, and Paula Hayes' "Cool Bride or Bruce Lee Is Dead" suggests a more explosive, though no less neurotic, form of retro-Popism. Maureen Connor's piece, however, does not make us think of Broodthaers. Her "Ensemble for Three Female Voices," set in a curtained-off space, consists of three "impaled" larynxes cast in red lipstick. We hear three recorded voices: one seems to murmur, while another laughs and the third weeps. It's a Duchampian mean-machine.

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—Walter Annenberg, who made a name for himself as the publisher of *TV Guide,* turned down a billion-dollar offer for his modern-art collection and chose instead the nobler path of philanthropy by bequeathing it to this museum several months ago. The gift of the collection, which had been perhaps the finest grouping of Impressionist and Post-Impres-



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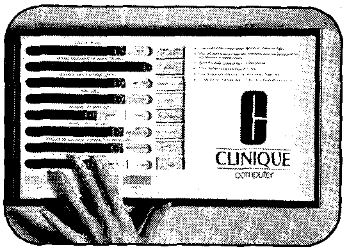
Total Cover SPF 30 offers something more in the way of sun protection. For many, that's a deciding factor.



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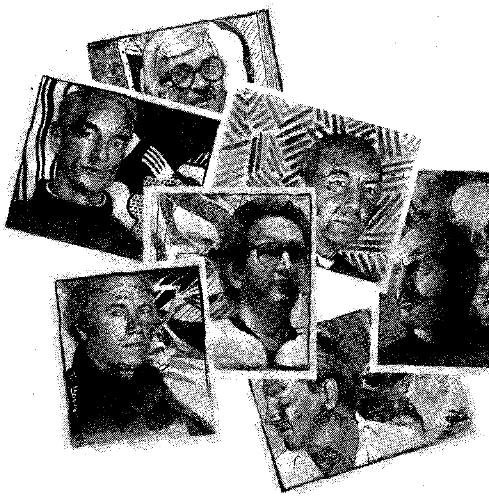
sionist paintings still in private hands, sets a standard of excellence for future patrons of the arts. The exhibition begins with some exquisite small works by Fantin-Latour, followed by two rooms, devoted to Monet, van Gogh, Gauguin, and Cézanne, that would be the pride of any museum. These rooms include some of the collection's finest works, such as Monet's "Poppy Field, Argenteuil" (1875), Gauguin's "The Siesta" (1892-94), and Cézanne's "The House with the Cracked Walls" (1892-94), all of which were purchased by Annenberg in 1983 from his sister Enid Haupt. Farther on are some very good early-twentieth-century works, including Picasso's haunting "At the Lapin Agile" (1905), an important but somewhat overwrought Vuillard, a beautiful Matisse, and a very pretty Bonnard; these works, however, are not up to the same level as the great Impressionist ones. Through Oct. 13. . . . ¶ "The Sculpture of Indonesia," which includes much material on display outside its native land for the first time, exposes us to the fascinating, if only partially knowable, world of Hindu and Buddhist sculpture. The show begins with a few magnificent Bronze Age works—such as a massive ceremonial tablet and axe with fanciful shapes and crisp geometric details in shallow relief—that are included just to indicate that ceremonial object-making did not begin with the arrival of the Indian deities. Many of these prehistoric pieces bear a strong resemblance to contemporaneous ones from China and what is now Vietnam; it is virtually impossible to distinguish a number of the Hindu and Buddhist works here from their Indian antecedents. But when an Indonesian sculptural identity emerges, it is hard to surpass. A stone sculpture of Prajnaparamita, the goddess of transcendental wisdom, is considered perhaps Indonesia's most important sculpture, and it is indeed the embodiment of grace. It was carved around 1300, in East Java, at the same time and in the same place as a very different statue of Bhairava, a fierce and demonic four-armed deity who wears a necklace of small severed heads, sits on a jackal, and rests his feet on a mound of human skulls. There are many other contrasts in the exhibition, and numerous sculptural wonders, including one of the five hundred and four seated Buddhas from Borobudur, the largest Buddhist temple in the world. Through Aug. 18. . . . ¶ If you need a break from the blockbusters, or the line for the restaurant is too long, you might wander through the Islamic galleries to "The Perfect Page," a small, glorious display of a few dozen illuminated manuscripts from the museum's extensive collection of Persian, Ottoman, and Indian works from the fourteenth century through the nineteenth. As one might expect, there are remarkably detailed volumes of the Koran, with their fanciful Arabic script, and there is also an amazing Ottoman calendar in the form of a scroll, which indicates not simply the date but also the aspects of the sun, the phases of the moon, and the times of prayer in the various seasons. Also included is an exquisite sultan's cipher, similar to the one included in the museum's recent Süleyman the Magnificent extravaganza; this piece must be history's first decorative whiplash shape, anticipating the very modern Art Nouveau lines that followed much later. Through Aug. 18. . . . ¶ A hundred and fifty sculptures, drawings, and decorative objects by Paul Manship (1885-1966). Through Sept. 1. . . . NOTE: The museum's roof garden, planted with nine sculptures by Rodin, is open when the weather permits. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 W. 53rd St.—"Nudes," a show of fifty photographs by Lee Friedlander taken over the past twelve years. Through Oct. 8. . . . ¶ Ad Reinhardt's single-color abstractions from the late fifties and sixties are often considered to be the Nordic lodestars of minimalism. With this retrospective, MOMA, for one, has certainly built a powerful case for such a judgment, and, in its inimitable way, has tried to bring the gavel down on that view as well. It is a very intense and occasionally eerie exhibition. Its concluding sequence, for instance, is a bright room filled with twenty of the artist's black-on-black paintings, arranged in a rhythmically stentorian fashion in which luminous nuances—Reinhardt's infinitesimal gradations of tone and his latent imagery, most notably the nearly ubiquitous cruciforms—have been all but obliterated. The impact is terrifically jolting, like a door slammed shut or a gunshot fired in the concluding scene of a play. But in a strange way it is also anticlimactic. Before getting to this last, black room, viewers have slid through a sort of Wonderland rabbit chute of rooms in which colors first appear in natural abundance, then are gradually distilled, and finally are apotheosized into firmaments of blue, then red. In terms of pure, retinal drama, the high point of the show occurs during the transition from earth to Heaven, as it were, in a room given to half-tones and seemingly disembodied clarion notes against taupe, mauve, and puce-colored grounds, and in the segue from this room into one that is very suddenly, very astrally blue. It is a breathtaking moment, both disorienting and exhilarating. Visually, if not polemically, the hot spot of the show is right there. Through Sept. 2. . . . ¶ A small but pleasurably edifying show of drawings and models by the landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx. A Brazilian who works mainly in his own country, Burle Marx is an uncompromisingly modern gardener who sculpts and paints with nature in broad, mid-century rhythms and bold strokes. If his emphasis on rubber plants sometimes harks back to all those progressive corporate lobbies of the fifties, his most panoramic vistas still have the big, beautiful look of Tomorrow. Through Aug. 13. . . . ¶ "Seven Master Printmakers: Innovations in the Eighties." A respectable yet somewhat anachronistic exhibition, loaded with nostalgia for the days when an artistic canon was firmly in place. It is the curator's contention that all the artists in the show, who rose to prominence in the sixties, continued to be innovators in the eighties. Of all the artists shown, Jasper Johns has remained the most engaged in the process of printmaking. Be they etchings, lithographs, or monotypes, Johns' works are exquisite records of gesture. The selection of his prints here forms a thoughtful counterpoint to the retrospective of his drawings mounted recently at the Whitney. As for David Hockney and Jim Dine, they have produced little of historical interest in the eighties, and nowhere is this more evident than in their prints. There is a lot of experimentation in Frank Stella's prints from the decade, but of a sort that perhaps only a technician could love. James Rosenquist entered some risky territory with his eighties prints, and the payoff was great, at times perhaps even greater than in his paintings. Roy Lichtenstein is an undeniable master of the medium, but the selection here is unsatisfying. Robert Rauschenberg is a master, too, and shown here are the kinds of collaged images he does best, but their technique is virtually indistinguishable from what he was doing twenty-five years ago. Through Aug. 13. . . . ¶ A video installation by Thierry Kuntzel is the latest work in the "Projects" series. Through Sept. 2. . . . NOTE: The museum's sculpture garden, at 14 W. 54th St., is open, free, on Fridays and Saturdays from 6 to 10, with musicians from the Juilliard School performing at 7:30. This summer's program is dedicated to the music of Erik Satie. (The museum is open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)



"Seven Master Printmakers" at MOMA

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—The museum is closed for renovation until early 1992.

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—Over the past decade it became a near-cliché to invoke John Baldessari's influence as a teacher. As if to assault paradox—and, perhaps, ironically to embrace Baldessari's pedagogical reputation—this retrospective has been organized into eight loosely chronological, didactically labelled rooms, each of which is further equipped with its own printed, loose-leaf, lesson-cum-exam-question page. In Room 1, for example, we pluck a page with the heading "Lessons on Art and Art Making" and, looking at the wall, find "Wrong," a 1967 word-and-image painting that consists of a silk-screened picture of a man standing in front of a tree on a suburban street. " 'Wrong,' " we read, "breaks the rule that one should never take a picture of someone in front of a tree because it will look as if the tree were growing out of the person's head." It's interesting how much Baldessari eventually picked up from his ex-students and others. If the lessons of the first two rooms provide virtual blueprints for the likes of David Salle, Richard Prince, and Jenny Holzer, the last rooms declare that important teachers never stop learning. Tips from Salle, in particular, are quite obvious by the close of this show, but—more unexpectedly—so are the effects, it seems, of shaped canvases by the abstract painter Elizabeth Murray. Through Oct. 20. . . . ¶ "American Life in American Art" is an exhibition of nearly a hundred and seventy twentieth-century paintings and sculptures from the museum's permanent collection, including works by George Bellows, Edward Hopper, Edward Kienholz, and David Smith. . . . ¶ The long-neglected decorative artist Hunt Diederich (1884-1953)—a contemporary of Elie Nadelman, whose work Diederich's faintly suggests—was born in Hungary, the son of a Prussian cavalry officer and a proper-Bostonian artist. After some schooling in Switzerland, he came to the States to live with his maternal grandfather, the painter William Morris Hunt; then he went out West to become a cowboy. His *animalier* sculptures, cowboyish and not, were a hit in Paris at the 1913 Salon d'Automne, where "Greyhounds" was bought by a Baron Rothschild. This high-pitched curriculum vitae—amplified by sojourns in Fascist Germany, and a crippling injury caused by a fall from scaffolding—seems to have affected his thinking. In 1947, he sent out anti-Semitic material by mail in envelopes marked "with compliments from Members of the National Institute of Arts and Letters." He was expelled from the institute, and died not long after, while working on a bas-relief for the A.S.P.C.A. headquarters in Manhattan. Diederich's art is fanciful and filigreed: wrought-iron fire screens, trivets, and candlesticks, for instance, with fox and ibex motifs. Bravo to the Whitney for this rediscovery. Through Sept. 29. (Open Tuesdays, 1 to 8; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 5; Sundays, 11 to 6.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM, Eastern Parkway—Although the museum now has to close whole floors at certain times of the day, because of a two-million-dollar cut in city support, you can always see Chris Burden's "Medusa's Head," which is the most recent in an excellent series of lobby installations by contemporary artists. Burden's fourteen-foot suspended Medusa, which has yet to turn a single mortal to stone, is overrun with creepy, crawling railroad tracks instead of snakes. There are hundreds of them working their way in and out of a purgatorial rutted-rock landscape meant to resemble an asteroid, transporting rock to who knows where. Trains, which usually are symbols of industrialization, Western expansion, and progress, are depicted here as mechanical, postindustrial chain gangs. This is a very strong work. Through Sept. 2. . . . ¶ "Quattrocento," a small exhibition of a few dozen early-Renaissance panel paintings from Italy, shows off another of the many fine corners of the Brooklyn Museum's vast collection. The works are all small and most of them are minor, but they cogently present the history of the quattrocento, giving a sense of its rich spread throughout northern Italy. The show begins with a charming trecento "Last Supper," attributed to Vitale de Bologne, that exhibits archaic perspective, and a marvellous triptych by Maso di Banco, one of Giotto's most gifted pupils, that in one panel depicts an elongated Christ on a blood-spattered Cross. Flemish influence is evident in a tender portrait of St. Jerome by Donato dei Bardi, and the voluminous lit-velvet drapery of Venice is represented by a depiction of St. James Major by Carlo Crivelli. A curiously stormy world view is presented by the Marchigian Lorenzo d'Alessandro da San Severino, and a mysterious sense of time standing still haunts a little "Venus and Mars" attributed to Palma Vecchio. That work, dated circa 1515, is the latest in the show. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

Cooper-Hewitt Museum, Fifth Ave. at 91st St.—Since its founding, in 1897, by the three Hewitt sisters, whose goal was to elevate taste in America, the Cooper-Hewitt has accumulated a marvellous, if rarely displayed, library of the decorative arts. "A Design Resource" is a rotating sampler of nearly a thousand objects drawn from the collection: old tarot cards, tapestry fragments from a few millennia ago, architectural drawings, gilt furniture mounts (including a representation of a tiny pair of human feet), locks, eighteenth-century button samples, lace, chairs of every date and style, ornately beaded boxes, and Viennese tableware. The installation, while a little deconstructively tricky upstairs, flows quite well, and many of the contrasts are entertaining. How can you not love an exhibition that juxtaposes a nineteenth-century birdcage in the shape of a chapel, an Egyptian funerary boat from the Middle Kingdom, and ornate copper food molds? (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge from 5 to 9; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Jewish Museum, at the New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park W., at 77th St.—"Painting a Place in America: Jewish Artists in New York, 1900-45." Jewish painters and sculptors have certainly made contributions to the history of twentieth-century American art, but this is a weak idea for an exhibition, and no great historical insight is gained by the segregation. What the viewer is left with is primarily an impression of second-rate, labored art—the essentially boring heaviness of urban social realism, as typified by the Soyer brothers and provincial abstraction. But there are some delightful discoveries in the show, including a witty, Cubistic 1915 portrait of Marsden Hartley by Ben Benn, and a mythical, Old World circus scene by Benjamin Kopman, with shades of Chagall, Ensor, and Marc. Through Sept. 29. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and Sundays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 3.)

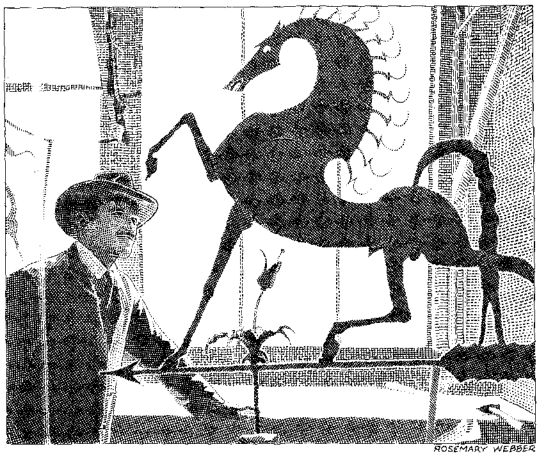
Museum of American Folk Art, Columbus Ave. at 65th St.—"Paint, Powder, and Leaf" showcases nearly a hundred decorated objects, from tin coffeepots and cannisters to wood chests and iron fire screens. Through Sept. 15. . . . ¶ A show of twenty-four quilts with floral themes, all prize-winners from this spring's Great American Quilt Festival. Through Sept. 15. . . . ¶ Forty-five narrative paintings by Harry Lieberman (1880-1983). Through Sept. 22. (Open daily, 9 to 9.)

National Academy of Design, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—In the exhibition "Illustrating Nature: The Art of Botany," the New York Botanical Garden's collection is represented by ninety-five watercolors, pen-and-ink drawings, books, and dried plant specimens. Through Sept. 29. (Open Tuesdays, noon to 8, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5.)

The New Museum, 583 Broadway—"Africa Explores: Twentieth-Century African Art" presents more than a hundred art works in various mediums. Through Aug. 18. (The exhibition has been organized by the Center for African Art. See Galleries.). . . ¶ In a show called "Embodying Faith," five contemporary artists tackle the theme of the relationship between the physical and the spiritual in Christianity. Through Aug. 18. . . . ¶ The Catalan artist Perejaume has filled the window on Broadway with some old blue theatre seats, which visitors are invited to occupy, in a tired examination of viewer and viewed. Inside the museum, beside the window's entrance, is a large photograph of a grid of such seats in the desert. It is beautiful and odd, in ways the current installation isn't. Through Aug. 18. . . . ¶ "Eclipse of the Earth," an installation by Kazuo Katase. Through Aug. 18. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, noon to 8.)

New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park W., at 77th St.—A show of sixty drawings, photographs, and prints of New York structures built at the turn of the century by the architectural firm of McKim, Mead, and White. Through Sept. 1. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—"Kingdoms of Land, Sea, and Sky" includes a hundred and eighty zoological woodcuts, engravings, and watercolors by artists and naturalists such as Albrecht Dürer, John James Audubon, Edward Lear, and Maria Sibylla Merian. Through Aug. 24. (Gottesman Exhibition Hall. Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6.). . . ¶ A display of recently acquired rare books and manuscripts, including Joseph Conrad's manuscript for "The Secret Sharer" and Washington Irving's for "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." Through Oct. 12. (Berg Collection. Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6.)


ROSEMARY WEBBER

Hunt Diederich at the Whitney

Queens Museum of Art, Flushing Meadow Park—"Imágenes Líricas: New Spanish Visions." An astonishingly rich and ambitious art world has sprung up in post-Franco Spain, with seven brand-new museums devoted, at least in part, to living artists; a spirited major international art fair; an impressive array of exhibitions and collections; and a network of dozens of thriving, serious art galleries. This exhibition presents eight artists who the curators believe are the most interesting to have emerged in this newly opened environment. However, the works, which do not conform to any one trend, suffer by and large from an academic cosmopolitanism, even as they express unique qualities of Catalan, Moorish, or Spanish culture. José María Sicilia, the most widely noted of the batch, is a gifted painter who seeks to represent the fleeting and the abstract, but all too often his works seem programmatic. Juan Uslé is perhaps even more gifted with a brush, but his quest for self-expression, like that of the more lyrical Juan Carlos Savater, who plays Dove to Uslé's Ryder, is without issues or viewpoint. Perejaume is the most playful artist here. His neo-conceptual collages of paint and postcards play with image and abstraction, reproduction and art, in entertaining, if somewhat familiar, ways. And his postcard rack, which is filled with mirrors instead of vacation memories, examines issues of landscape, place, and representation crisply and intelligently. Through Sept. 8. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 8; Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5.)

Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 W. 125th St.—A retrospective of works by Romare Bearden (1912-88), which includes a hundred and forty-one oils, collages, and watercolors. Through Aug. 11. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

GALLERIES

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Mondays through Fridays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

"Africa Explores: Twentieth-Century African Art"—At the Center for African Art, which organized the exhibition (another part of the show is on view at the New Museum), the great African sculpture that modernist artists and European collectors valued and that shaped our idea of African art is relegated to the final room, where it serves as a startling epitaph for traditions that no longer exist. The exhibition is an attempt to reverse the commonly held belief that contemporary African art is in the doldrums. Although only some of the work is successful, the show is always provocative and often entertaining. The material is organized into five categories—"traditional," "new functional," "urban," "international," and "extinct"—which are used to distinguish, for example, paintings made as "signs" from those made as "art." Perhaps the most inventive works are the Pop coffins of Ghana's Kane Kwei. One, made to transport a taxi-fleet owner to his final resting place, is in the form of a Mercedes-Benz; another resembles an onion. There are lively comparisons here, such as that between Magdalene Odundo's elegant, very modernistic long-necked ceramic vessels and traditional ritualistic statues whose quirky figuration seems somehow related. Painting, a relatively new form for the continent, seems to have reached its most inventive level in Zaire, with the naïve pictographs of Albert Lubaki and the charming political narratives of the self-taught Chéri Samba (including his hilarious "Battle with the Mosquitos"). The catalogue is dense and rich, with everything from photographs of trucks, grave markers, and chiefs' houses to an essay on "Afro-kitsch." (Center for African Art, 54 E. 68th St. Open daily, except Mondays; opens Sundays at noon. Through Dec. 29. . . . ¶ The New Museum, 583 Broadway. Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, noon to 8. Through Aug. 18.)

"Portraits on Paper"—This selection of works in several mediums is an interesting counterpoint to the portrait show that Chuck Close, who is represented here, recently assembled at the Museum of Modern Art. Unlike Close's show, in which the portraits were racked and stacked on every available surface, this one gives ample space to each work. A tilt of the head, a reticent eye, a pair of pouting lips—these are the revealing details, as seen in such works as a Samaras pastel, a Clemente watercolor, and an early Warhol photo-booth self-portrait. A Cindy Sherman self-portrait, taken in 1975, when the artist was a college junior, shows her as a little girl who might well have stepped out of a Walker Evans photograph. This is social realism kissed by a subtle sarcasm, and it prefigures the tone much of her generation went on to convey. Through Aug. 16. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St.)

"True to Life"—There's a sense of suspended reality about many of the works in this oddly interesting show, such as Thomas Ruff's photograph of a markedly unpeopled residential street, Vito Acconci's model for a park bench in the form of a giant bra, and even Jurgen Meyer's simulated abstract painting. Introduced here are the earnest, kitschy "Happy Worker" dolls of Daniel Oates, which fall somewhere between the works of Jeff Koons and Robert Gober. Through Aug. 9. (303 Gallery, 89 Greene St. Closed Mondays, open Saturdays.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

WE didn't make our usual rounds this week, because we have an adventurous father who, on the occasion of our mother's seventieth birthday, has gathered his disparate clan for a celebration in the Grand Canyon. Up until this trip, our image of the Grand Canyon had come solely from looking at photographs, and we must admit that we were reluctant to see the actual spectacle, fearing that it might not live up to the grace and wondrousness of those nineteenth-century views that are so rich a part of the history of photography. But blood is thicker than such concerns, and now we've gasped at this metaphysical landscape, and at its tourist attractions, too. We've seen a sign pointing to "Bedrock City" (inspired by "The Flintstones," and promising "Yabba-Dabba-Doo camping too!"); we've watched "Over the Edge," a mini-movie about the canyon that's so Muzak-sappy it could push *you* over the edge; and we've fought it out for parking spots and won and lost. This is a place that should make all photography companies smile. We've never seen so many people with cameras! There are even ethnic-slur camera jokes, such as the one a man told us about the photographer who was told to be careful about who ended up in the foreground of his pictures. The punch line goes, "Watch it, or else people will think the Grand Canyon's in Japan."

We positioned ourself at a spot overlooking the south rim, toward which photographers seemed magnetically drawn because of a telescope that had been installed there. After witnessing dozens of visitors clicking away, we ran into a New York couple. The man snapped a shot while saying to his wife, "They don't have to do me any favors. If they've got a room, fine; if not, you want to go to Las Vegas?" We asked if he found it difficult to capture the Grand Canyon in a photograph. "I've never had any trouble," he said with confidence. "They come out fine."

PHOTOGRAPHY AT THE MET—A personal and engaging summer exhibition from the permanent collection. All five of the photographers represented work in very different ways: Andrew Bush captures someone driving in a car, isolated and deep in a private world, while René Sultra uses the metaphor of a brick wall to create a visualization of his father's death. Larry Sultan also delves into his family (and its dynamics), with his stills of old home movies and recent portraits of his parents. Philip-Lorca diCorcia's photos are strong in their suggestions of loneliness and alienation. And from Sally Mann there are gracefully complex photographs of kids hanging around. These five visions make for a show rich in both narrative implications and textures of feeling. Through Sept. 8. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

SHORT LIST—**LEE FRIEDLANDER,** Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9, through Oct. 8); **NIC NICOSIA** and **BETTINA RHEIMS,** Pace-MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. (through Aug. 30); **NINA HOWELL STARR** and **MICHAEL VON GRAFFENRIED,** Witkin, 415 West Broadway (through Aug. 23).

MUSIC

IN the landscape of regional American opera, the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis has carved out a special niche: an intimate theatre, English texts, a season in summer, mostly young singers, adventurous repertoire, and an emphasis on thoughtful staging. Visits to St. Louis have been a reliable source of pleasure over the years. A fresh delight over the past six or seven seasons has been the growth of another company with similar ideals—Glimmerglass Opera, in Cooperstown. The troupe, founded in 1974, has not yet found St. Louis's comfortable stride, but its best work has been very fine, and its internship program has been a positive force in the odd mix of influences that shape our young American singers. Jonathan Miller began an association with the opera a couple of seasons ago, and this year he is taking on Beethoven's "Fidelio" for the first time. The conductor is Stewart Robinson, and a considerable heroine—Jeannine Altmeyer, remembered by innumerable operagoers and television audiences for her vigorous, healthy Sieglinde—is joining the company for the project, which opens on August 10. The other August offering, opening on the ninth, is "Il Rè Pastore," a work of Mozart's youth that is scarcely known today save for one "hit" aria with violin obbligato.

We note with mixed feelings that, in its advertisements, Glimmerglass now puts the stage director above the conductor in cast listings. This reflects the growing tendency everywhere to consider the visual aspect of an operatic performance its main interpretive focus. Glimmerglass goes along—but thoughtfully.

IN TOWN

MOSTLY MOZART FESTIVAL—Aug 5: Chamber works by Mozart, Jan Ladislav Dussek, Rossini, and others, performed by flutist Jean-Pierre Rampal, harpist Marielle Nordmann, hornists Paul Ingraham and Richard Hagen, and the Mendelssohn String Quartet. . . . **NOTE:** In a pre-concert recital, beginning at 7 and open to ticket-holders, the Mendelssohn String Quartet plays—appropriately—a Mendelssohn string quartet. . . . ¶ Aug. 6-7: Hans Graf conducts the Festival Orchestra in music by Mozart: two symphonies, the Piano Concerto in B-Flat, K. 450 (featuring Anne-Marie McDermott), and the Concerto for Flute and Harp (with Mr. Rampal and Ms. Nordmann). . . . **NOTE:** In pre-concert recitals, beginning at 7 both evenings and open to ticket-holders, the three soloists play solo and chamber works by Scarlatti, Mozart, and Francesco Petrini. . . . ¶ Aug. 8: Bruno Weil conducts the Classical Band in Schubert's last two symphonies, and fortepianist Malcolm Bilson is featured in Mozart's E-Flat Major Piano Concerto, K. 271. . . . **NOTE:** In a pre-concert recital, beginning at 7 and open to ticket-holders, the Four Nations Ensemble, with Andrew Appel presiding from the harpsichord, performs Mozart's Third Keyboard Concerto (in E-Flat Major, arranged from a sonata by J. C. Bach), as well as a sonata by Mondonville. . . . ¶ Aug. 9-10: George Cleve conducts the Festival Orchestra in Mendelssohn's "Italian" Symphony and three works by Mozart: his Second Violin Concerto, K. 211 (featuring Pamela Frank); his G-Major Piano Concerto, K. 453 (with Peter Serkin); and his "Gallimathias Musicum," K. 32. The last, a quodlibet written by the ten-year-old composer in 1766, toward the end of his family's seven-month-long visit to The Hague, strings together eighteen brief movements based on Dutch, Austrian, and Bavarian popular tunes of the day (including that beloved chestnut, "On the Castration of a Boar") before concluding with a fugue on the Dutch national hymn, "Willem van Nassau." . . . ¶ Aug. 12: The Takács String Quartet, assisted by flutist Eugenia Zukerman and pianist Garrick Ohlsson, performs works by Mozart and Dvořák. . . . **NOTE:** In a pre-concert recital, beginning at 7 and open to ticket-holders, Mr. Ohlsson performs Haydn's Piano Sonata No. 52, in E-Flat, and, with Ms. Zukerman, Mozart's Sonata, K. 376. . . . ¶ Aug. 13-14: André Previn conducts the Festival Orchestra in Mozart's "Serenata Notturna" and Haydn's Symphony No. 102; the conductor doubles as the soloist in Mozart's C-Minor Piano Concerto. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Evenings at 8. Through Aug. 24.)

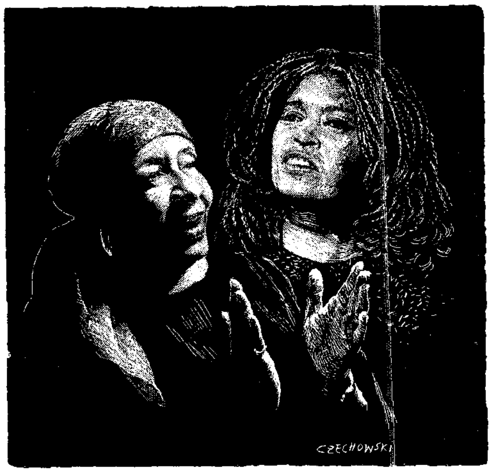
NEW YORK CITY OPERA—**LA TRAVIATA,** in a new production, in which the heroine is cast as a consumptive, cosmopolitan call girl commuting between New York and Paris; with Sheryl Woods, Martin Thompson, and Gaetan La Perrière; conducted by Guido Ajmone-Marsan. (Aug. 6 at 8 and Aug. 11 at 2.) . . . **CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA** and **PAGLIACCI,** in a new production of the double bill that transposes the action of both operas to New York's Little Italy. With Sharon Graham, Melanie Sonnenberg, and Stephen O'Mara (in the former); and Gwynne Geyer, John Absalom, and Sigmund Cowan (in the latter). Richard Bradshaw conducting both. (Aug. 7 and Aug. 13 at 8.) . . . **LA BOHÈME,** with Michèle Boucher, Lauren Flanigan, Robert Brubaker, and Carlos Serrano; Joseph Colaneri. (Aug. 9 and Aug. 14 at 8.) . . . **TURANDOT,** with Rebecca Copley, Christiane Riel, Antonio Barasorda, and Harry Dworchak; Guido Ajmone-Marsan. (Aug. 10 at 2.) . . . **A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC,** with Sally Ann Howes, Elaine Bonazzi, Beverly Lambert, George Lee Andrews, Kevin Anderson, and Michael Maguire; Paul Gemignani. (Aug. 10 at 8.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

BARGEMUSIC—Solo and chamber works by Mozart, Beethoven, and Dvořák, performed by violinist Nai-Yuan Hu, cellist Jian Wang, and pianist Anne-Marie McDermott. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Aug. 8-9 at 7:30 and Aug. 11 at 4.)

OUT OF TOWN

TANGLEWOOD—Aug. 6 at 8:30: Pianist Peter Serkin joins a chamber group in music by Hans Werner Henze, Colin Matthews, Ronald Ford, György Ligeti, and Rob Zuidam. . . . ¶ Aug. 7 at 8:30: The Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra, conducted by Oliver Knussen and Mark Stringer, performs Imbrie's First Symphony (1965); David Del Tredici's "An Alice Symphony" (1968-69), featuring soprano Phyllis Bryn-Julson; and a new work by Carolyn Yarnell. . . . ¶ Aug. 8 at 8:30: Pianist Ivan Moravec performs music by Debussy and Beethoven (including the "Appassionata" and "Pathétique" sonatas). . . . ¶ Aug. 9 at 9: Charles Dutoit conducts the Boston Symphony in Kodály's "Peacock" Variations, Schumann's Fourth Symphony, and Mozart's Piano Concerto in B-Flat, K. 450 (with Jeffrey Kahane). . . . **NOTE:** In a pre-concert recital, beginning at 7 and open to ticket-holders, Mr. Kahane performs Mozart's Sonata, K. 332, and (with assisting artists) Beethoven's Piano-Winds Quintet. . . . ¶ Aug. 10 at 8:30: Charles Dutoit conducts the Boston Symphony in Rachmaninoff's "Symphonic Dances," Hindemith's "Symphonic Metamorphoses on a Theme of Weber," and Mozart's Piano Concerto in D-Major, K. 537 (featuring Yefim Bronfman). . . . ¶ Aug. 11 at 2:30: Orpheus, the conductorless chamber orchestra, performs small-scale symphonic works by Haydn, Wolf, and Tchaikovsky, as well as Mozart's Piano Concerto in E-Flat, K. 449 (with Cecile Licad). . . . ¶ Aug. 14 at 8: The Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra, a Boston University student orchestra, and musicians from the Boston Symphony are conducted alternately by Seiji Ozawa, Charles Dutoit, Leon Fleisher, and David Hoose in a benefit concert that culminates in Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture" and accompanying pyrotechnics. (Lenox, Mass. For information about tickets, call 1-413 637-1940.)

NORFOLK CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL—Final concerts of this year's festival. Aug. 9 at 8:30: Pianist Peter Frankl, violinist György Pauk, and cellist Ralph Kirshbaum perform cham-



"Classical Jazz": Abbey Lincoln and Shirley Horn

ber music by Mozart, Brahms, and Dvořák. . . . ¶ Aug. 10 at 8:30: Gustav Meier conducts the Norfolk Chamber Orchestra in works by Copland and Mozart (including the latter's Clarinet Concerto, with soloist David Shifrin). (Route 44, Norfolk, Conn. For information about tickets, call 1-203 542-5[illegible]37.)

Caramoor Music Festival—Final concerts of the season. Aug. 9 at 9: A visit from the personnel of the Bridgehampton Chamber Music Festival, who will perform works by Mozart, Dvořák, and Poulenc. . . . ¶ Aug. 10 at 8:30: Dave Brubeck and his quartet. . . . ¶ Aug. 11 at 5:30: Bach concertos for one, two, three, and four violins, featuring Helen Kwalwasser, Hamao Fujiwara, Michael Roth, and Suzanne Ornstein, accompanied by the New York Chamber Soloists. (Katonah, N.Y. For information about tickets, call 1-914 232-125[illegible].)

Waterloo Festival Orchestra—In the final concert of the season, soprano Alessandra Marc sings the "Zweite Brautnacht!" from Strauss's "Die Ägyptische Helena," and "Brangaene's Warning" and the "Liebestod" from Wagner's "Tristan und Isolde." The program also includes D'Indy's "Istar Variations," Howard Hanson's Fourth Symphony, and the Symphonic Fragment from Strauss's "Die Frau ohne Schatten." Gerard Schwarz conducts. (Waterloo Village, Stanhope, N.J. Aug. 10 at 8:30. For ticket and travel information, call 1-201 347-4700.)

JAZZ/POP/ROCK
PERSONAL APPEARANCES

Lollapalooza Festival—Another summer, another hundred festivals. This entry's full of alternative acts, some of which get little if any, airplay. And, surprisingly, it has become one of the most popular tours of the year. Boasting a couple of great bands (Jane's Addiction and Living Colour) and some mediocre ones (Butthole Surfers and Nine Inch Nails), this nine-hour tour package will have a hard time building up a head of steam. Concerts like this are all uphill, and the promoters are promising a carnivalesque atmosphere—activists and artists all along the concert grounds—so buyer beware. (Waterloo Village, Stanhope, N.J. 1-201 347-4700. Aug. 11 at 1 and Aug. 14 at 2.)

Jimmy Buffett—This Key West poet of the Hawaiian-shirt set (his big hit was "Margaritaville") plays children's music for adults: he's like a Raffi for ex-hippies. His annual summertime concerts are ritualized, audience-participation events along the lines of a Grateful Dead show (Buffett's fans are called "parrotheads") or a midnight screening of "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" (the crowd knows when to sing along and has mastered a repertoire of hand gestures and sound effects). The songs are silly odes to tropical torpor and sentimental recollections of wild youth, and they're performed by the singer's Coral Reefer Band in a pleasant calypso-rock style. It's a mindless, therapeutic good time, and the obligatory tailgate party and parking-lot barbecue before the show is half the fun. (Jones Beach Theatre. 1-516 221-1000. Aug. 14 at 8.)

Clint Black—Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. Aug. 9 at 8.

Ruth Brown—Two Musicruise concerts on a Circle Line boat. (Pier 81, Twelfth Ave. at 41st St. 941-1234. Aug. 9 at 8 and 10:30; boarding starts at 7:30 and 10.)

Mark Morganelli & the Jazz Forum All-Stars—Riverside Park Rotunda, W. 79th St., near the Boat Basin. Aug. 11 at 4 and 6. No tickets necessary.

David Sanborn—Beacon, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Aug. 12-13 at 8.

Third World, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, and **Arrow**—Apollo Theatre, 253 W. 125th St. 864-0372. Aug. 13 at 7 and 11.

"Classical Jazz"—Aug. 6: A tribute to King Oliver, with Michael White, Wynton Marsalis, Greg Stafford, and others. . . . ¶ Aug. 7: Abbey Lincoln and Shirley Horn. . . . ¶ Aug. 8: Jay McShann, Claude (Fiddler) Williams, Charles McPherson, the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, and Jimmy Slyde. . . . ¶ Aug. 9: A salute to John Coltrane, with Tommy Flanagan, Joe Henderson, Mr. Marsalis, and others. . . . ¶ Aug. 10-11: Music by Duke Ellington, performed by the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, featuring Milt Grayson and Mr. Marsalis, among others. (Alice Tully Hall. 362-1911. Evenings at 8.)

Jones Beach Theatre—Aug. 8 at 8: Lynyrd Skynyrd, with the Jeff Healey Band. . . . ¶ Aug. 9 at 8: Elvis Costello, with the La's. . . . ¶ Aug. 10-11 at 7:30: Bell Biv DeVoe, Tony! Toni! Toné!, C & C Music Factory, Gerardo, and Tara Kemp. (1-516 221-1000.)

SPORTS

HOME TEAMS

Mets—Vs. the Chicago Cubs, Aug. 5 at 7:40. . . . ¶ Vs. the Pittsburgh Pirates, Aug. 6-7 at 7:40 and Aug. 8 at 1:40.

Yankees—Vs. the Detroit Tigers, Aug. 9-10 at 7:30 and Aug. 11 at 1:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the Kansas City Royals, Aug. 13-14 at 7:30 and Aug. 15 at 1.

(The Mets play at Shea Stadium, 1-718 507-8499, and the Yankees play at Yankee Stadium, 293-6000.)

RACING

Horses—At Saratoga Springs: Daily, except Tuesdays, at 1. The Alabama is Aug. 10. Through Aug. 26. . . . At Monmouth Park, Oceanport, N.J.: Weekdays, except Mondays and Thursdays, at 1:05. Through Sept. 2. . . . At Atlantic City Race Course: Wednesdays through Saturdays at 7:15. Through Aug. 31. . . . **trotting** at Yonkers Raceway: Mondays through Saturdays at 8, Tuesdays at 1, and Sundays at 6. . . . At the Meadowlands: Weeknights at 7:30. Through Aug. 19. . . . At Saratoga Raceway, Saratoga Springs: Wednesdays through Saturdays at 7:45.

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Harlem Festival—Jazz and gospel concerts, exhibition basketball games, seminars, and street fairs are all part of this two-week-long (Aug. 5-18) celebration of Harlem. For a schedule of events, call 427-7200.

Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors—Aug. 6 at 5:30: Dance by Ellen Cornfield. . . . At 8:15: World-beat music by Sam Mangwana. . . . ¶ Aug. 7 at 5:30: "Nobles of the Mystic Shrine," a concert of music from Sousa to Cage. . . . At 6:30: The Buster Williams quintet. . . . ¶ Aug. 8 at noon: Gretchen Langheld, with House Afire. . . . At 5:30: Dances called "Deconstructed Clogging," by Johanna Boyce. . . . At 8:15: Iso, a dance troupe, with choreographer Daniel Ezralow. . . . ¶ Aug. 9 at 5:30: The Manhattan Rhythm Kings. . . . At 8:15: Iso and Mr. Ezralow. . . . ¶ Aug. 10: Clown Day, all day. . . . ¶ Aug. 11 at 5:30: Jazz ballet by the Crew. . . . At 8:15: Flutists Herbie Mann, Dave Valentin, Buddy Collette, and Holly Hofmann. . . . ¶ Aug. 13 at 5:30: A dance on stilts by Alice Farley. . . . At 8:15: Laura Dean Dancers and Musicians. . . . ¶ Aug. 14 at 5:30: Tap dancing by Hotfoot. . . . At 8:15: Laura Dean Dancers and Musicians. (Lincoln Center. Through Aug. 26. No tickets necessary. For rain-date information, call 875-5400.)

Floating Movie—A collection of cartoons projected onto a screen floating in the Hudson River. Watch from dry land (Riverside Park, at 98th St.) on Aug. 7, starting at 8:45. No tickets necessary.

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THE MOVIE HOUSES

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FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN THE "IN BRIEF" SECTION, STARTING ON PAGE 16.

EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000)
Theatre 1: "Slacker" (directed by Richard Linklater).
Theatre 2: "Regarding Henry" (†).
Theatre 3: "La Femme Nikita" (Luc Besson; in French), with Anne Parillaud, Jean-Hugues Anglade, Tcheky Karyo, and Jeanne Moreau.
Theatre 4: "The Dark Backward" (Adam Rifkin), with Judd Nelson, Bill Paxton, Wayne Newton, and Lara Flynn Boyle.
Theatre 5: "An Angel at My Table" (†).
Theatre 6: "Trust" (†).

Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)
Theatre 1: Aug. 5: Theatre closed. . . . ¶ Aug. 6-7: "Flying Down to Rio" (1933, Thornton Freeland), with Dolores Del Rio, Gene Raymond, Raul Roulien, Ginger Rogers, and Fred Astaire; and "Follow the Fleet" (1936, Mark Sandrich), with Ginger Rogers, Fred Astaire, Randolph Scott, and Harriet Hilliard. . . . ¶ Aug. 8: "Peeping Tom" (1960, Michael Powell), with Karl Boehm and Moira Shearer; and "The Servant" (1963, Joseph Losey), with Dirk Bogarde, Sarah Miles, Wendy Craig, and James Fox. . . . ¶ From Aug. 9: To be announced.
Theatre 2: Aug. 5: Theatre closed. . . . ¶ Aug. 6-7: "Wedding in Galilee" (1987, Michel Khleifi; in Arabic and Hebrew); and "Rodrigo D: No Future" (1988, Victor Manuel Gaviria; in Spanish). . . . ¶ Aug. 8: "The Goldwyn Follies" (1938, George Marshall), with Zorina and Adolphe Menjou; and "Roman Scandals" (†). . . . ¶ Aug. 9-11: "Wonder Bar" (1934, Lloyd Bacon), with Al Jolson, Kay Francis, and Dick Powell; and "42nd Street" (†). . . . ¶ Aug. 12: Theatre closed. . . . ¶ Aug. 13-14: "Swing Time" (1936, George Stevens), with Ginger Rogers, Fred Astaire, Helen Broderick, Victor Moore, and Betty Furness; and "Shall We Dance" (1937, Mark Sandrich), with Rogers, Astaire, Edward Everett Horton, Jerome Cowan, and Eric Blore.

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)
Theatre 1: "Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves" (†).
Theatre 2: "Terminator 2: Judgment Day" (†).
Theatre 3: Through Aug. 8: "Return to the Blue Lagoon" (William A. Graham), with Milla Jovovich and Brian Krause. From Aug. 9: "Bingo!" (Matthew Robbins).

Loews Village Theatre VII, 3rd Ave. at 11th. (982-0400)
Theatre 1: "Thelma & Louise" (†).
Theatre 2: "Life Stinks" (Mel Brooks), with Brooks and Lesley Ann Warren.
Theatre 3: "Boyz N the Hood" (John Singleton).
Theatre 4: "Body Parts" (Eric Red), with Jeff Fahey.
Theatre 5: "Another You" (Maurice Phillips), with Gene Wilder and Richard Pryor.
Theatre 6: "Boyz N the Hood."
Theatre 7: "Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey" (†).

Cinema Village 12th Street, 22 E. 12th. (924-3363)
"Eating" (Henry Jaglom).

Village East Cinemas, 2nd Ave. at 12th. (529-6799)
Theatre 1: "The Miracle" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Doctor" (Randa Haines), with William Hurt, Christine Lahti, Mandy Patinkin, and Elizabeth Perkins.
Theatre 3: "Ju Dou" (†).
Theatre 4: "Doc Hollywood" (Michael Caton-Jones), with Michael J. Fox.
Theatre 5: "V. I. Warshawski" (Jeff Kanew), with Kathleen Turner.
Theatre 6: Through Aug. 8: "Straight Out of Brooklyn" (Matty Rich). From Aug. 9: "Crossing the Line" (David Leland), with Liam Neeson and Joanne Whalley-Kilmer.
Theatre 7: (Matinées only) "101 Dalmatians" (†); and (evenings only) "Impromptu" (James Lapine), with Judy Davis, Hugh Grant, Mandy Patinkin, Bernadette Peters, and Julian Sands.

Cinema Village 3rd Avenue, between 12th and 13th. (505-7320)
"Voyeur" (Alex van Warmerdam).

Loews 19th Street East 6, B'way at 19th. (260-8000)
Theatre 1: "Regarding Henry" (†).
Theatre 2: "Regarding Henry" (†).
Theatre 3: "The Naked Gun 2½: The Smell of Fear" (†).
Theatre 4: "Terminator 2: Judgment Day" (†).
Theatre 5: "Terminator 2: Judgment Day" (†).
Theatre 6: "Return to the Blue Lagoon" (William A. Graham), with Milla Jovovich and Brian Krause.

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)
"The Doctor" (Randa Haines), with William Hurt, Christine Lahti, Mandy Patinkin, and Elizabeth Perkins.

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)
"Mobsters" (†).

Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th. (689-6548)
Theatre 1: (Matinées only) "101 Dalmatians" (†); and (evenings only) "Thelma & Louise" (†).
Theatre 2: "V. I. Warshawski" (Jeff Kanew), with Kathleen Turner.
Theatre 3: "Doc Hollywood" (Michael Caton-Jones), with Michael J. Fox.
Theatre 4: "Boyz N the Hood" (John Singleton).

Loews 34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)
Theatre 1: "Return to the Blue Lagoon" (William A. Graham), with Milla Jovovich and Brian Krause.
Theatre 2: "Life Stinks" (Mel Brooks), with Brooks and Lesley Ann Warren.
Theatre 3: "Regarding Henry" (†).

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)
"Hot Shots!" (Jim Abrahams), with Charlie Sheen, Gary Elwes, Valeria Golino, and Jon Cryer.

Eastside Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)
Through Aug. 8: "Soapdish" (Michael Hoffman), with Sally Field.
From Aug. 9: "Delirious" (Tom Mankiewicz), with John Candy.

Sutton 1 and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)
Theatre 1: "V. I. Warshawski" (Jeff Kanew), with Kathleen Turner.
Theatre 2: "Doc Hollywood" (Michael Caton-Jones), with Michael J. Fox.

Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)
"Hot Shots!" (Jim Abrahams), with Charlie Sheen, Gary Elwes, Valeria Golino, and Jon Cryer.

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)
"Jungle Fever" (†).

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 8: "Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey" (†). From Aug. 9: "Double Image" (Sheldon Lettich), with Jean-Claude Van Damme.
Theatre 2: Through Aug. 8: "Another You" (Maurice Phillips), with Gene Wilder and Richard Pryor. From Aug. 9: Double Image."

59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th. (759-4630)
"Body Parts" (Eric Red), with Jeff Fahey.

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)
Theatre 1: "Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves" (†).
Theatre 2: "Mobsters" (†).

Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)
Theatre 1: "The Doctor" (Randa Haines), with William Hurt, Christine Lahti, Mandy Patinkin, and Elizabeth Perkins.
Theatre 2: "Boyz N the Hood" (John Singleton).
Theatre 3: (Matinées only) "101 Dalmatians" (†); and (evenings only) "The Miracle" (†).

Gemini 1 and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 8: "Terminator 2: Judgment Day" (†). From Aug. 9: "Bingo!" (Matthew Robbins).
Theatre 2: "Terminator 2: Judgment Day" (†).

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)
"City Slickers" (†).

Loews New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)
Theatre 1: "Life Stinks" (Mel Brooks), with Brooks and Lesley Ann Warren.
Theatre 2: "Return to the Blue Lagoon" (William A. Graham), with Milla Jovovich and Brian Krause.

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)
"Thelma & Louise" (†).

Loews Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)
"Regarding Henry" (†).

U. A. East, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)
"The Naked Gun 2½: The Smell of Fear" (†).

Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th. (534-1880)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 8: "Mobsters" (†). From Aug. 9: "Double Image" (Sheldon Lettich), with Jean-Claude Van Damme.
Theatre 2: "Hot Shots!" (Jim Abrahams), with Charlie Sheen.

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
Theatre 1: "Doc Hollywood" (Michael Caton-Jones), with Michael J. Fox.
Theatre 2: (Matinées only) "101 Dalmatians" (†); and (evenings only) "V. I. Warshawski" (Jeff Kanew), with Kathleen Turner.

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 13: "Weininger's Last Night" (1989, directed by Paulus Manker; in German). From Aug. 14: "In the Shadow of the Stars" (Irving Saraf and Allie Light).
Theatre 2: See listings under Revival Houses.
Theatre 3: "The Famine Within" (Katherine Gilday), a documentary.

Bleecker Movie House, 144 Bleecker St. (807-9205)
Theatre 1: "Tatie Danielle" (Etienne Chatiliez; in French), with Tsilla Chelton.
Theatre 2: (Separate admissions) "Archangel" (Guy Maddin); and "Poison" (Todd Haynes).

Waverly 1 and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)
Theatre 1: "Mobsters" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Aug. 8: "Jungle Fever" (†). From Aug. 9: "Double Image" (Sheldon Lettich), with Jean-Claude Van Damme.

8th St. Playhouse, 52 W. 8th. (674-6515)
"Truth or Dare" (Alek Keshishian), with Madonna.

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)
Theatre 1: "Hot Shots!" (Jim Abrahams), with Charlie Sheen, Gary Elwes, Valeria Golino, and Jon Cryer.
Theatre 2: Through Aug. 8: "The Naked Gun 2½: The Smell of Fear" (†). From Aug. 9: "Pure Luck" (Nadia Tass), with Martin Short and Danny Glover.

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)
Theatre 1: "Truly, Madly, Deeply" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Aug. 8: "The Comfort of Strangers" (Paul Schrader), with Natasha Richardson, Rupert Everett, Christopher Walken, and Helen Mirren. From Aug. 9: "Blowback."
Theatre 3: "My Father's Glory" (Yves Robert, in French), with Julien Ciamaca.
Theatre 4: Through Aug. 6: "Soapdish" (Michael Hoffman), with Sally Field. From Aug. 7: "A Paper Wedding" (Michel Brault, in French), with Geneviève Bujold.

Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd. (691-4744)
Theatre 1: "City Slickers" (†).
Theatre 2: "Jungle Fever" (†).
Theatre 3: "Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves" (†).
Theatre 4: "Mobsters" (†).
Theatre 5: "Boyz N the Hood" (John Singleton).
Theatre 6: Through Aug. 13: "Hot Shots!" (Jim Abrahams), with Charlie Sheen. From Aug. 14: "The Commitments" (Alan Parker).
Theatre 7: "Doc Hollywood" (Michael Caton-Jones), with Michael J. Fox.
Theatre 8: Through Aug. 8: "Mobsters" (†). From Aug. 9: "Pure Luck" (Nadia Tass), with Martin Short and Danny Glover.
Theatre 9: Through Aug. 8: "Point Break" (†). From Aug. 9: "Double Image" (Sheldon Lettich), with Jean-Claude Van Damme.

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)

Theatre 1: "V. I. Warshawski" (Jeff Kanew), with Kathleen Turner.

Theatre 2: (Separate admissions) "Another You" (Maurice Phillips), with Gene Wilder and Richard Pryor; and "Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey" (†).

Theatre 3: "Body Parts" (Eric Red), with Jeff Fahey.

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)

"Regarding Henry" (†).

Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)

Theatre 1: "Truth or Dare" (Alek Keshishian), with Madonna.

Theatre 2: "Mobsters" (†).

Theatre 3: "Jungle Fever" (†).

Theatre 4: "Regarding Henry" (†).

Theatre 5: "The Naked Gun 2½: The Smell of Fear" (†).

Theatre 6: "Thelma & Louise" (†).

Roddy McDowall in "My Friend Flicka"

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)

Through Aug. 8: "City Slickers" (†).

From Aug. 9: "Pure Luck" (Nadia Tass), with Martin Short and Danny Glover.

Loews Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)

"The Naked Gun 2½: The Smell of Fear" (†).

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)

Through Aug. 8: "Thelma & Louise" (†).

From Aug. 9: "Crossing the Line" (David Leland), with Liam Neeson and Joanne Whalley-Kilmer.

Carnegie Hall Cinemas, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)

Theatre 1: "Trust" (†).

Theatre 2: "Tatie Danielle" (Etienne Chatiliez; in French), with Tsilla Chelton.

Loews Fine Arts, 4 W. 58th. (980-5656)

"My Mother's Castle" (Yves Robert, in French), with Julien Ciamaca.

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)

"Point Break" (†).

Loews Paramount, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)

"The Doctor" (Randa Haines), with William Hurt, Christine Lahti, Mandy Patinkin, and Elizabeth Perkins.

62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd. (265-7466)

Through Aug. 13: "Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey" (†).

From Aug. 14: "The Commitments" (Alan Parker).

Lincoln Plaza 1, 2, and 3, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)

Theatre 1: "Everybody's Fine" (Giuseppe Tornatore, in Italian), with Marcello Mastroianni.

Theatre 2: "Europa Europa" (†).

Theatre 3: Through Aug. 8: "A Paper Wedding" (Michel Brault, in French), with Geneviève Bujold.From Aug. 9: "Paris Is Burning" (†).

Regency, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)

"Hot Shots!" (Jim Abrahams), with Charlie Sheen.

Loews 84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)

Theatre 1: "Life Stinks" (Mel Brooks), with Brooks and Lesley Ann Warren.

Theatre 2: "Body Parts" (Eric Red), with Jeff Fahey.

Theatre 3: "Regarding Henry" (†).

Theatre 4: "Doc Hollywood" (Michael Caton-Jones), with Michael J. Fox.

Theatre 5: "Terminator 2: Judgment Day" (†).

Theatre 6: "Return to the Blue Lagoon" (William A. Graham), with Milla Jovovich and Brian Krause.

Metro Cinema 1 and 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)

Theatre 1: (Matinées only) "101 Dalmatians" (†); and (evenings only) "The Naked Gun 2½: The Smell of Fear" (†).

Theatre 2: Through Aug. 8: "Mobsters" (†). From Aug. 9: "Pure Luck" (Nadia Tass), with Martin Short and Danny Glover.

Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)

Theatre 1: "Boyz N the Hood" (John Singleton).

Theatre 2: Through Aug. 8: "V. I. Warshawski" (Jeff Kanew), with Kathleen Turner. From Aug. 9: "Double Image" (Sheldon Lettich), with Jean-Claude Van Damme.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)

Theatre 1: "Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves" (†).

Theatre 2: "Terminator 2: Judgment Day" (†).

Theatre 3: "Terminator 2: Judgment Day" (†).

Theatre 4: "Point Break" (†).

Theatre 5: "Hot Shots!" (directed by Jim Abrahams), with Charlie Sheen.

Theatre 6: Through Aug. 8: "Another You" (Maurice Phillips), with Gene Wilder and Richard Pryor. From Aug. 9: "Bingo!" (Matthew Robbins).

Embassy 1, B'way at 46th. (302-0494)

"V. I. Warshawski" (Jeff Kanew), with Kathleen Turner.

Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)

Theatre 1: "Body Parts" (Eric Red), with Jeff Fahey.

Theatre 2: "Return to the Blue Lagoon" (William A. Graham), with Milla Jovovich and Brian Krause.

Theatre 3: Through Aug. 8: "Life Stinks" (Mel Brooks), with Brooks and Lesley Ann Warren. From Aug. 9: "Delirious" (Tom Mankiewicz), with John Candy.

Loews Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)

"Boyz N the Hood" (John Singleton).

National Twin, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)

Theatre 1: "Mobsters" (†).

Theatre 2: Through Aug. 8: "Jungle Fever" (†). From Aug. 9: "Double Image" (Sheldon Lettich), with Jean-Claude Van Damme.

West Side Cinema 1 and 2, 7th Ave. at 48th. (398-1720)

Theatre 1: "Straight Out of Brooklyn" (Matty Rich).

Theatre 2: "Doc Hollywood" (Michael Caton-Jones), with Michael J. Fox.

REVIVAL HOUSES

Biograph Cinema, 225 W. 57th. (582-4582)

Aug. 6-7: "Lethal Weapon" (1987, directed by Richard Donner), with Mel Gibson, Danny Glover, Gary Busey, Mitchell Ryan, Darlene Love, and Traci Wolfe; and "Lethal Weapon 2" (1989, Richard Donner), with Gibson and Glover.

Aug. 8-10: "The Lodger" (1944, John Brahm), with Merle Oberon, George Sanders, and Laird Cregar; and "Time After Time" (†).

Aug. 11-12: "The Private Life of Henry VIII" (†); and "Young Bess" (1953, George Sidney), with Jean Simmons, Stewart Granger, Deborah Kerr, and Charles Laughton.

Aug. 13-14: "My Friend Flicka" (†); and "Thunderhead—Son of Flicka" (1945, Louis King), with Roddy McDowall, Preston Foster, and Rita Johnson.

Film Forum 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)

Aug. 7: "Gangs of New York" (1938, James Cruze), with Charles Bickford and Ann Dvorak; and two television shows directed by Samuel Fuller.

Aug. 8: "Shock Corridor" (1963, Samuel Fuller), with Constance Towers, Peter Breck, and James Best; and "The Naked Kiss" (1964, Samuel Fuller), with Constance Towers and Anthony Eisley.

Aug. 9-13: "House of Wax" (1953, André de Toth), with Phyllis Kirk, Vincent Price, Frank Lovejoy, and Carolyn Jones.

Aug. 14: "Cobra Woman" (†); and "Dr. Cyclops" (1940, Ernest B. Schoedsack), with Albert Dekker.

Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)

Aug. 7: "White Heat" (1949, Raoul Walsh), with James Cagney, Virginia Mayo, Edmond O'Brien, and Margaret Wycherly; and "The Roaring Twenties" (1939, Walsh), with Cagney and Humphrey Bogart.

Aug. 8: "Paths of Glory" (1957, Stanley Kubrick), with Kirk Douglas, Ralph Meeker, Adolphe Menjou, and George Macready; and "The Killing" (†).

Aug. 9-10: "Notorious" (1946, Alfred Hitchcock), with Cary Grant, Ingrid Bergman, Claude Rains, and Louis Calhern; and "Spellbound" (1945, Hitchcock), with Bergman, Gregory Peck, Michael Chekhov, John Emery, and Leo G. Carroll.

Aug. 11: "The Man Who Loved Women" (†); and "Pardon Mon Affaire" (1977, Yves Robert; in French), with Jean Rochefort, Victor Lanoux, and Claude Brasseur.

Aug. 12: "Bob le Flambeur" (1955, Jean-Pierre Melville; in French), with Isabel Corey and Roger Duchesne; and "My Life to Live" (1962, Jean-Luc Godard; in French), with Anna Karina.

Aug. 13: "Ministry of Fear" (†); and "The Fallen Idol" (1948, Carol Reed), with Bobby Henrey, Ralph Richardson, and Michèle Morgan.

Aug. 14: "Goldfinger" (1964, Guy Hamilton), with Sean Connery, Honor Blackman, and Gert Frobe; and "Dr. No" (1963, Terence Young), with Sean Connery, Ursula Andress, and Joseph Wiseman.

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9490)—Aug. 5 at 2:30 and Aug. 6 at 6: "Where Spring Comes Late" (1970, directed by Yoji Yamada; in Japanese), with Hirashi Igawa and Chishu Ryu. . . . ¶ Aug. 5 at 6 and Aug. 6 at 2:30: "Explosion on the Bullet Train" (1975, Junya Sato), with Ken Takakura and Kei Yamamoto. . . . ¶ Aug. 8 at 2:30 and Aug. 11 at 5: "Ballad of a Soldier" (1959, Grigori Chukhrai; in Russian), with Vladimir Ivashov. . . . ¶ Aug. 8 at 6 and Aug. 11 at 1: "The Narrow Margin" (1952, Richard Fleischer), with Charles McGraw and Marie Windsor; and "The Narrow Margin" (1990, Peter Hyams), with Gene Hackman and Anne Archer. . . . ¶ Aug. 9 at 2:30 and Aug. 13 at 6: "Housekeeping" (1987, Bill Forsyth), with Christine Lahti. . . . ¶ Aug. 9 at 6 and Aug. 13 at 2:30: "Twentieth Century" (1934, Howard Hawks), with John Barrymore, Carole Lombard, and Walter Connolly. . . . ¶ Aug. 10 at 2 and Aug. 12 at 6: "Silver Streak" (1976, Arthur Hiller), with Gene Wilder, Jill Clayburgh, and Richard Pryor. . . . ¶ Aug. 10 at 5 and Aug. 12 at 2:30: "Finders Keepers" (†).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077)—"Leo McCarey: The King of Comedy," a program of films written or directed by McCarey. Aug. 6 at 2: "Once Upon a Honeymoon" (1942), with Ginger Rogers and Cary Grant. . . . ¶ Aug. 7 at 2: "Going My Way" (1944), with Bing Crosby and Barry Fitzgerald. . . . ¶ Aug. 8 at 2: "The Bells of St. Mary's" (1945), with Crosby and Ingrid Bergman. . . . ¶ Aug. 9 at 2: "Good Sam" (1948), with Gary Cooper and Ann Sheridan. . . . ¶ Aug. 10 at 1:30 and Aug. 13 at 2: "My Son John" (1951), with Robert Walker and Helen Hayes. . . . ¶ Aug. 10 at 4 and Aug. 14 at 2: "An Affair to Remember" (1957), with Grant and Deborah Kerr. . . . ¶ Aug. 11 at 1: Two television programs by McCarey—"You Can Change the World" (1951), with Loretta Young; and "Meet the Governor" (1955), with Herb Shriner. . . . ¶ Aug. 11 at 2: "Rally Round the Flag, Boys" (1958), with Paul Newman, Joanne Woodward, and Joan Collins. . . . ¶ Aug. 11 at 4: "Satan Never Sleeps" (1962), with William Holden and Clifton Webb.

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Aug. 7 at 12:30 and 6: "L'Étrange Monsieur Victor" (1938, Jean Grémillon; in French), with Raimu, Madeleine Renaud, Viviane Romance, and Pierre Blanchar. . . . ¶ Aug. 7 at 3:15 and 8:45: "Ces Messieurs de la Santé" (1933, Pierre Colombier; in French, with no English subtitles), with Raimu, Edwige Feuillère, Pauline Carton, and Lucien Baroux. . . . ¶ Aug. 14 at 12:30 and 6: "Les Années Folles" (1960, Miréa Alexandresco and Henri Torrent), a documentary. . . . ¶ Aug. 14 at 3:15 and 8:45: "Man About Town" (1946, René Clair; in French), with Maurice Chevalier, Marcelle Derrien, François Périer, and Gaston Modot.

MOVIE HOUSES–Cont'd

Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., State Office Building, 163 W. 125th St. (873-5040)—Aug. 5 at 1: "The River Niger" (1976, Krishna Shah), with James Earl Jones, Louis Gossett, Jr., and Cicely Tyson; and "The Final Comedown" (1972, Oscar Williams), with Billy Dee Williams. . . . ¶ Aug. 5 at 4:30: "Joe's Bed-Stuy Barbershop: We Cut Heads" (1983, Spike Lee); and "House Party" (1990, Reginald Hudlin), with Christopher Reid and Robin Harris. . . . ¶ Aug. 5 at 7 and Aug. 11 at 1: "Glory" (1989, Edward Zwick), with Matthew Broderick, Denzel Washington, Morgan Freeman, and Cary Elwes; and "The Making of 'Glory' " (1989). . . . ¶ Aug. 6 at 1: "Mo' Better Blues" (1990, Spike Lee), with Denzel Washington, Lee, Wesley Snipes, and Giancarlo Esposito; and "John Coltrane: The Legacy" (1985, Burrill Crohn). . . . ¶ Aug. 6 at 4:30: "She's Gotta Have It" (1986, Spike Lee) and "Joe's Bed-Stuy Barbershop: We Cut Heads." . . ¶ Aug 6 at 7:10: "Brightness" (1987, Souleymane Cisse); and "Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti" (1974, Maya Deren). . . . ¶ Aug. 7 at 7 and Aug. 14 at 1 and 4:35: "Mo' Better Blues" and "She's Gotta Have It." . . ¶ Aug. 8 at 7: "Abby" (1974, William Girdler), with William Marshall; and "Def by Temptation" (1990, James Bond III), with Kadeem Hardison. . . . ¶ Aug. 9 at 1, 3:45, and 7:30: "To Sleep With Anger" (1990, Charles Burnett), with Danny Glover; "Joe's Bed-Stuy Barbershop: We Cut Heads"; and "Making 'Do the Right Thing' " (1989, St. Clair Bourne), a documentary. . . . ¶ Aug. 10 at 1: "Malcolm X: By Any Means Necessary" (1990) and "The FBI's War on Black America" (1990, Denis Mueller). . . . ¶ Aug. 10 at 4: "We Remember the 1955 Apollo Theatre" (1986, Gregory Mills) and "James Brown: The Man" (1979). . . . ¶ Aug. 10 at 7: A three-hour program of black comedians on film. . . . ¶ Aug. 11 at 4:15: "Zou Zou" (1934, Marc Allégret; in French), with Josephine Baker and Jean Gabin; and "Princess Tam Tam" (1935, Edmond T. Gréville; in French), with Baker and Albert Préjean. . . . ¶ Aug. 11 at 7:30: "House Party"; and "Dolemite" (1974, D'Urville Martin), with Rudy Ray Moore. . . . ¶ Aug. 12 at 2 and 4:30: "Place of Weeping" (1988, Darel Roodt) and "Bikko: Breaking the Silence" (1988, Ollie Maruma). . . . ¶ Aug. 12 at 6:30: "To Sleep in Anger" and "Joe's Bed-Stuy Barbershop: We Cut Heads." . . ¶ Aug. 13 at 1: "Langston Hughes: The Dream Keeper" (1988, St. Clair Bourne), "From These Roots" (1978, William Greaves), and "Ida B. Wells" (1990, Greaves). . . . ¶ Aug. 13 at 3:35: "Glory"; and "Frederick Douglass: An American Life" (1989, William Greaves). . . . ¶ Aug. 13 at 6:35: "Cooley High" (1972, Michael Schultz), with Glynn Turman; and "Hollywood Shuffle" (1987, Robert Townsend), with Keenan Ivory Wayans and Townsend. . . . ¶ Aug. 14 at 6:30: "Sweet Sweetback's Baddasssss Song" (1973, Melvin Van Peebles); and "Identity Crisis" (1990, Van Peebles), with Mario and Melvin Van Peebles.

IN BRIEF

SEE ABOVE FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS.
IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

Richard Lester's 1984 screwball comedy, "Finders Keepers" (playing August 10 and 12 at the Museum of Modern Art), is a far-out, entertaining movie. It has some of the breezy cynicism and wised-up innocence of Lester's Beatles films, though the key soundtrack song belongs to the Beach Boys ("I Get Around"). It's one of the few cases where a director has indulged in free-form zaniness of the "Naked Gun" variety and still been able to merge it with a complicated narrative. The 1973 setting provides Vietnam and Watergate backdrops and spotlights Lester's affinity with the period's iconoclastic pop culture. The picture features Michael O'Keefe as a Jack-of-few-trades, Louis Gossett, Jr., as his con-artist mentor, Beverly D'Angelo as an actress in the middle of a nervous breakdown, Jack Riley as a superficially competent F.B.I. agent, John Schuck as a blatantly incompetent sheriff, David Wayne as the country's oldest railway conductor, Arthur Hill as a millionaire, Pamela Stephenson as his daughter, Ed Lauter as the sleazoid who helps her escape with five million of Daddy's dollars, Brian Dennehy as a parboiled small-town mayor, and Jim Carrey as the mayor's officially dead nephew.

Much of the physical comedy pays homage to Buster Keaton—especially the final set piece, which unfolds in a moving house. But the shaken, not stirred cocktail of unhinged characters, and O'Keefe's impersonation of a sergeant bringing Carrey's coffin to his discombobulated home town, recall the Preston Sturges of "Hail the Conquering Hero." The plot is a device to reveal the delusions of each nut case, leaving the con people on top. The comic derangement spreads through the cast like a psychic case of hiccups, and it infects the audience, too. D'Angelo is a scintillating cartoon; she brings down the house every time she bats her crazy eyes.

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow.)

An Angel at My Table—Based on the autobiography of the New Zealand novelist and poet Janet Frame. The film covers the first forty years or so of the writer's life—she was born in 1924—and takes close to three hours to tell the story. When it's all over, you feel that you know far too little about Janet Frame and far too much about the film's director, Jane Campion. The movie (which was made as a three-part miniseries for Australian television) is a succession of odd, mannered tableaux, more or less in the style of Campion's 1990 art-house hit, "Sweetie." The compositions emphasize the peculiarities of Janet's appearance, especially in her childhood and awkward adolescence: she has a stiff, frizzy mop of bright-orange hair, and her teeth are badly decayed. The Janet Frame we see in this film doesn't seem to have an inner life, and without that she has no life at all. Even the most dramatic events in her life are treated so flatly and elliptically that we're unable to respond; time after time, we find that we can't orient ourselves in crucial scenes, because the director hasn't bothered to establish the characters or the setting. Writers' lives are weird enough without being subjected to this sort of willful disruption of their emotional continuity. Campion's perverse exercise in biographical filmmaking deserves a new title: "My Incomprehensible Career." Janet is played by three actresses: as a child, by Alexia Keogh; as a young teenager, by Karen Fergusson; and, as an adult, by Kerry Fox. Screenplay by Laura Jones.—T.R. (Reviewed in our issue of 6/3/91.) (Angelika Film Center.)

Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey—Spotty, amusing, and openly silly. For those who missed the first entry, Bill (Alex Winter) and Ted (Keanu Reeves) are boyz n the burbs with dysfunctional families and zero brains. They channel their energies into a teen-age mutant vocabulary (Dude! Duder! Excellent! Bogus!) and a series of synchronized hand riffs. They're also destined to be heroes of future world civilization, a prospect that alarms this film's villain (Joss Ackland), a twenty-second-century fascist dude who sends evil robots of Bill and Ted back in time to kill the originals before an epochal Battle of the Bands. In the middle of this confident retread, the director, Pete Hewitt, and the writers, Chris Matheson and Ed Solomon, sandwich something far more free and funny—a slapstick version of "The Seventh Seal" in which Bill and Ted play games with Death. William Sadler, so terrifying and sardonic as Walter Hill's "The Man Who Was Death" (for HBO's "Tales from the Crypt" series), is splendidly outré as the Grim Reaper. He undergoes a second (or maybe a first) childhood after Bill and Ted best him in diversions like Clue and Twister. His expressions of abashment are almost touching, and his very Old World accent ranks with the best of Peter Sellers.—M.S. (Loews Village Theatre VII, and 23rd St. West Triplex. . . . ¶ Manhattan Twin; through Aug. 8. . . . ¶ 62nd & Broadway; through Aug. 13.)

City Slickers—This feel-good comedy, directed by Ron Underwood from a script by Lowell Ganz and Babaloo Mandel, is a depressingly efficient piece of Hollywood product. The hero, Mitch Robbins (Billy Crystal), is a thirty-nine-year-old New York family man who's going through a killer midlife crisis. His wife (Patricia Wettig) gets so fed up with his moping that she virtually orders him to take a vacation with his buddies Ed (Bruno Kirby) and Phil (Daniel Stern); Ed, a daredevil, macho type, has arranged for them to spend two weeks on a real cattle drive out West. Mitch's wife looks him in the eye, and says earnestly, "Go and find your smile"—and, ninety minutes later, there it is, a grin as big as all outdoors. His pals pick up the odd nugget of wisdom along the trail, too. The movie alternates predictable tenderfoot gags (sore behinds, stampedes, and the like) with long, ludicrous passages of group-therapy-on-the-range. Jack Palance, as Curly, the trail boss, manages some dry, macabre comic effects, and the animals are good—they're interesting to look at, and they don't make bad jokes. You can't help sympathizing with the cattle; by the time the movie is over, you know what it feels like to be part of the herd. Also with Helen Slater.—T.R. (6/17/91) (Beekman, and Chelsea Cinemas. . . . ¶ Ziegfeld; through Aug. 8.)

Cobra Woman (1944)—Camp classic, with Maria Montez as voluptuous twins. She's the good Tollea, a South Seas girl who is kidnapped just as she is about to marry John Hall (who smiles his moony, Mona Lisa smile and looks as boneheaded as ever), and she's the evil High Priestess Nadja, who rules a tribe of snake worshippers on Cobra Island. The impeccably lifeless cast includes Sabu, Edgar Barrier, Lon Chaney, Jr., Lois Collier, Mary Nash, Samuel S. Hinds, and Moroni Olsen. Among the exotic treats: a rumbling volcano, a pet chimp, ominous gong sounds, forest-glade love scenes, human sacrifice, Nadja's handmaidens in their high-heeled pumps, her imperious writhing during what is supposed to be a demonic dance, and the good Tollea's plea for the symbol of the power that is rightfully hers, "Gif me the cobra jool!" Directed by that playful wit Robert Siodmak (on sets that are often parodistic), from a script by Gene Lewis and Richard Brooks, based on a story by W. Scott Darling. This heavenly absurdity was an inspiration to Charles Ludlam, of the Ridiculous Theatrical Company, and Charles Vidor.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; Aug. 14.)

Europa Europa—This superb film by the Polish director Agnieszka Holland is based on the memoirs of Salomon Perel, a German Jew who spent much of the Second World War passing for Aryan in an élite Hitler Youth academy. The movie dramatizes this almost inconceivable survival story with a surprisingly light touch. It bounds from one jaw-dropping episode to the next with the speed and the unnerving neutrality of a picaresque adventure, and never pauses to judge its ambiguous hero; it's content to let the ironies of his situation collect around him like reflections in dressing-room mirrors. His family's flight from the Nazis begins in 1938, on the eve of his bar mitzvah. Solly (played by a remarkable young actor, Marco Hofschneider) lands first in Lodz, Poland, and then in the Soviet Union, where he becomes a star pupil in a Communist school. After the Wehrmacht invades Russia and takes him prisoner, he reincarnates himself as an orphaned "pure" German, an Aryan child wandering in the barbaric eastern wilderness; as translator and mascot, he accompanies the German soldiers on their march through Russia. By the time he is initiated into the Hitler Youth, he has already run through several identities, and has proved himself capable of playing his roles with conviction and enthusiasm. We remain, however, constantly aware (as he is) of what his Nazi disguise conceals—his circumcised penis, the irreversible and unambiguous sign of his identity as a Jew. Holland uses this physical evidence of Solly's Jewishness as the fulcrum of the movie's delicately balanced narrative and moral tensions. She shows us the thoroughness of Nazi terror in the pained expression of a teen-age boy who doesn't dare allow himself to be seduced. Also with Julie Delpy, Andre Wilms, Halina Labonarska, and Rene Hofschneider. The real Salomon Perel appears, as himself, in the movie's final scene. In German and Russian.—T.R. (7/1/91) (Lincoln Plaza.)

42nd Street (1933)—This big, cheerful Warners musical was based on a novel by Bradford Ropes but was also an unofficial remake of the 1929 "On with the Show"; it gave new life to the clichés that have kept parodists happy—what's surprising is how organic the clichés once were. The backstage story is pleasantly tawdry and corny. Warner Baxter is the great Broadway producer-director with heart trouble) who makes the memorable (and much lampooned) speech that begins: "Miss Sawyer, you listen to me . . . and you listen hard. Two hundred people, two hundred jobs, two hundred thousand dollars, five weeks of grind and blood and sweat depend upon you! It's the lives of all these people who've worked with you. You've got to go on and you've got to give, and give and give!" Peggy Sawyer, the understudy who has to go on for the star, is Ruby Keeler, who wears little puffed sleeves (for innocence) even in her rehearsal clothes; training her for the opening, the tough Baxter never tells her to stop looking at her feet—and neither, apparently, did the film's choreographer, Busby Berkeley. It's hard to decide which is klunkier—her dancing or her line readings—but it's just about impossible not to like her. (She had to play the nice girl—what else could she play?) Bebe Daniels is the fading star (in fox furs) who breaks her ankle; George Brent is her lover; Dick Powell is the singing and smiling twerpy juvenile; Ginger Rogers is the gold-digging chorine known as the "countess"; Guy Kibbee is a sugar daddy; Una Merkel and Toby Wing are in the chorus. The songs, by Harry Warren and Al Dubin (who make brief appearances) include "Shuffle Off to Buffalo," "You're Getting to Be a Habit with Me," "Young and Healthy," and, of course, "42nd Street." Lloyd Bacon directed; the screenplay is by Rian James and James Seymour; cinematography by Sol Polito.—P.K. (Public Theatre; Aug. 9-11.)

101 Dalmatians (1961)—One of the few Disney animated features that please adults as much as children, this action comedy has loads of waggish charm. The plot is out of a horror film. As Cruella De Vil prepares ninety-nine young Dalmatians for the kill so she can make dogskin coats, you can't help thinking, "The Silence of the Pups." By telling the story from the perspective of Pongo and Perdita, parents of fifteen dognap victims, the Disney team turns it into a light-fantastic parody: a dog's-eye (or child's-eye) view of storybook Britain. Humans are "pets," and a country-wide canine corps takes over when agencies like Scotland Yard fail. Cruella has been justly celebrated for her Tallulah-from-Hell flair (Betty Lou Gerson contributes an arsenal of Bankhead-like snarls). But Pongo is every bit her match. He's a gallant, resourceful animal with surprising pockets of slyness and gaiety, and the crisp virile voice of Rod Taylor. Headed by a blustery sheepdog colonel, a Kipling-esque trio of barnyard soldiers aid Pongo and Perdita. The small army of pups form a lovable composite character and a constantly changing sight gag. Trekking through a blizzard-blasted landscape, they're a cross between a canine caterpillar chain and a coal-flecked snowdrift. Bill Peet wrote the smart script, from Dodie Smith's book; Wolfgang Reitherman, Clyde Geronimi, and Hamilton S. Luske directed.—M.S. (Village East Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Cinema 3rd Avenue, 86th Street East Twin, and Metro Cinema. Matinées only.)

Ju Dou—It's been compared to James M. Cain, but the postman barely rings once in this tale of adultery Chinese style. In a small mountain village in the twenties, an impotent dye-mill owner (Li Wei), crazed over his lack of an heir, tortures his beautiful young bride (Gong Li). She seeks comfort in the arms of his worker nephew (Li Bao-Tian). There's no compelling plot, only the grinding inevitability of fate and tradition. The director, Zhang Yimou, simply metes out punishment to the lovers, the tyrant—and the audience. The lovers' son does most of the damage. He has the lethal power of the Children of the Damned—unfortunately, without the gimmicky zest of their eerie, glowing eyeballs. Zhang started out as a painter and still photographer. He remains one, devoting more attention to the dye mill's set design than to the story or the characters. The bolts of fabric are colored in subtle, vivid hues; the people are made out of whole cloth. In Mandarin.—M.S. (Village East Cinemas.)

Jungle Fever—The central event in Spike Lee's new movie is the love affair of Flipper (Wesley Snipes), a married African-American architect from Harlem, and Angie (Annabella Sciorra), an Italian-American office temp from Bensonhurst. Once Lee has set up the interracial relationship, he seems to lose interest in it; Flipper and Angie hold the stage only long enough to ignite the fears and hatreds of their communities, and when the fuse is lit their job is done. The movie's approach to its characters is stubbornly, and perversely, external; we never have the sense that we're getting inside anyone's skin (white or black). Everything in this picture is pitched at the level of public utterance. Lee's dialogue has the rhetorical tone of daytime-television talk shows; even in the most intense, emotionally charged domestic scenes, there's an alienating self-consciousness in the way the characters express themselves—they always look as if they had an ear cocked for audience response. This rhetorical barrage gives the picture a peculiar, halting rhythm: individual scenes have force and momentum, but the movie as a whole seems stalled, inert, uncertain where it's headed. And Lee's attitude toward interracial sex is shockingly puritanical; it's as if he were afraid that any hint of eroticism would constitute an endorsement of Flipper and Angie's affair. The scenes that deal with Flipper's crackhead brother, Gator (Samuel L. Jackson), have more energy than anything else in the picture; this subplot is tangential to the central theme, but it has some shape and dramatic coherence, and it actually builds to a climax. The interracial affair just dawdles to an underdramatized parting, and we feel nothing; emotionally, the movie has separated the lovers from each other, and from us, long before. Also with Lonette McKee, John Turturro, Anthony Quinn, Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, and Frank Vincent. The inventive cinematography is by Ernest Dickerson. Some fine new songs by Stevie Wonder grace the soundtrack.—T.R. (6/17/91) (Plaza, Chelsea Cinemas, and Worldwide Cinemas. . . . ¶ Waverly, and National Twin; through Aug. 8.)

Martin Donovan and John MacKay in "Trust"

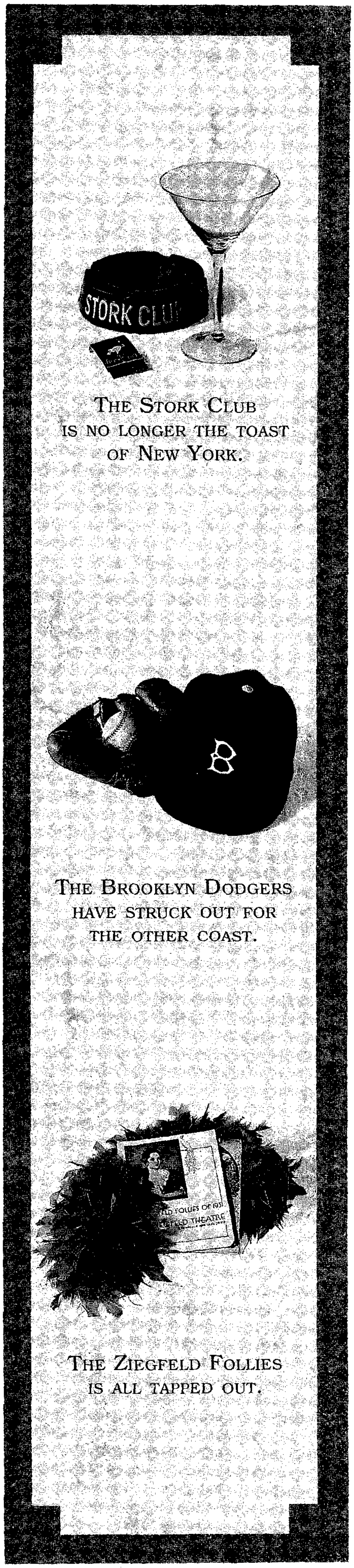
The Killing (1956)—Stanley Kubrick had made two pictures before this one, but they were juvenilia; this shrewdly worked-out suspense film, which he made at the age of twenty-seven, is the real beginning of his career. Centering on a racetrack robbery, it has fast, incisive cutting; a nervous, edgy style; and furtive little touches of characterization. The cast includes many familiar second-string actors, but they go through enough unfamiliar movements to keep one in an agreeable state of anxious expectation. Sterling Hayden is impressive as the ex-convict who plans the crime (there's a slight melancholy about him). With Elisha Cook, Jr., and fierce, tight Marie Windsor as his mismate; the generally underrated fine actress Coleen Gray; Jay C. Flippen; Timothy Carey as the sharpshooter; Ted de Corsia; Joe Sawyer; Vince Edwards; and Kola Kwarian as the chess-playing wrestler. Adapted by the director, from Lionel White's novel "Clean Break"; cinematography by Lucien Ballard.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Aug. 8.)

The Man Who Loved Women (1977)—The dedicated skirt-chaser of François Truffaut's film is meant to be irresistibly charming, but his compulsion looks to be about as exciting as building a two-foot replica of the Pentagon with toothpicks. In its gross flippancy, this film resembles Truffaut's "Such a Gorgeous Kid Like Me"—it may be even worse, because of the mixture of evasiveness and obviousness. With Charles Denner, Nelly Borgeaud, Brigitte Fossey, and Leslie Caron. Cinematography by Nestor Almendros; music by Maurice Jaubert. In French.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Aug. 11.)

Ministry of Fear (1944)—Very little of Graham Greene's mystery novel survives in this unmemorable Paramount picture, directed by Fritz Lang. As melodramas of the period go, however, this one is better made than most. Ray Milland has just been released from an insane asylum, where he was confined for murdering his wife, when he is drawn into a plot by a gang of German spies who are after defense plans. The heroine is the unimposing Marjorie Reynolds; the villain is that falsetto cutthroat Dan Duryea.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Aug. 13.)

The Miracle—A beautiful new film by the Irish writer and director Neil Jordan ("Mona Lisa," "The Company of Wolves"). The setting is the coastal town of Bray, which is a short train ride from Dublin. Two teen-agers, Jimmy (Niall Byrne) and Rose (Lorraine Pilkington), spend most of their days wandering along the seaside promenade and making up stories about the people they run into: taking off from the human material that presents itself to them, the kids trade verbal riffs with the gleeful competitiveness of jamming musicians. One day, they spot a mysterious-looking blond woman (Beverly D'Angelo), and Jimmy becomes obsessed with her. He pursues her, in Bray and in Dublin, with an ardor that's partly sexual and partly something else—a feeling so muddled and inchoate that he can't put a name to it. Jordan turns this simple story into a clear, complete vision of experience: everything we see (and hear) flows into everything else, with an unpredictable rightness. The imagery draws on some pretty outré sources, and the climax—the miracle of the title—is a daring, flamboyant gesture. But Jordan manages to unite everything—the florid imagery, the dark emotional undertones, the flaky comedy, the astonishing physical beauty of the Irish seacoast—into a single, unbroken mood, a smooth arc connecting the past and the present, the familiar and the unforeseen. Also with Donal McCann. The cinematography, by Philippe Rousselot, is extraordinary.—T.R. (7/15/91) (Village East Cinemas. . . . ¶ Cinema 3rd Avenue. Evenings only.)

Mobsters—When Christian Slater, as young Lucky Luciano, tells Meyer Lansky (Patrick

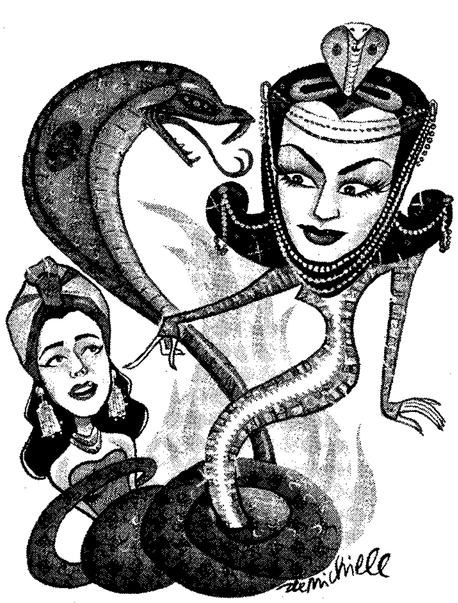

STORK CLUB
The Stork Club is no longer the toast of New York.
B
The Brooklyn Dodgers have struck out for the other coast.
Ziegfeld Follies of 1931
Ziegfeld Theatre
The Ziegfeld Follies is all tapped out.

Dempsey), Bugsy Siegel (Richard Grieco), and Frank Costello (Costas Mandylor) that it's time to play "with the big boys," he's delivering the statement of purpose for this bloody bore of a Mob travesty. It's an excuse for the latest crop of media-spawned personalities—the male equivalent of starlets—to invade the heavy-duty genre of the gangster film. They don't come up to Cagney's spats. The witless script, by Michael Mahern and Nicholas Kazan, and the goosed-up direction, by Michael Karbelnikoff, present the antiheroes as angels without dirty faces. These Jewish and Italian thugs bring an ecumenical spirit as well as modern business organization to the founding of the Syndicate. The moviemakers regard this as quite an accomplishment. With F. Murray Abraham, Michael Gambon, Lara Flynn Boyle, and the set-devouring Anthony Quinn.—M.S. (Bay Cinema, Coronet, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, Worldwide Cinemas, and National Twin. . . . ¶ Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Metro Cinema; through Aug. 8.)

My Friend Flicka (1943)—As a piece of moviemaking it's ordinary—and that's putting it kindly. But when Roddy McDowall is on the screen, that doesn't seem to matter; he has a magical seriousness. This is the story of a dreamy boy and his strange colt, Flicka, and the West Point-type father (Preston Foster) who understands neither boy nor horse. It's one of the rare children's films—old or new—that don't make you choke up with rage. With Rita Johnson and Jeff Corey. Mary O'Hara wrote the script, from her novel; Harold Schuster directed. (A sequel, in 1945, was called "Thunderhead—Son of Flicka.")—P.K. (Biograph Cinema; Aug. 13-14.)

The Naked Gun 2½: The Smell of Fear—Leslie Nielsen plays Frank Drebin, a middle-aged police lieutenant whose lethal weapon is utter obliviousness. This movie—like its predecessors, the 1982 TV series "Police Squad!" and the 1988 film "The Naked Gun"—has the look of cheap, hasty television action drama. It's oblivious of production values, narrative sense, and all the higher, finer aspects of the human spirit—of everything, that is, except the impulse to spray us with jokes and knock us out of our chairs. The director, David Zucker, has a defiantly cheesy style. For him, nothing's ever too trashy or worn out to be used again; what he practices is, in the truest sense, pulp comedy. There's a hint of an enviromental theme in the plot of "NG 2½," but Zucker and his co-writer, Pat Proft, never allow it to slow down the picture's relentless barrage of slapstick, movie parodies, outrageous double-entendres, and cracked musical production numbers. And Leslie Nielsen is inspired. He plays Drebin as a straight arrow who's finally letting go, giving in to his repressed impulses: he sings, he dances, he loves, he shoots to kill. Nielsen combines B-movie earnestness, exuberant mugging, and a trouper's slightly desperate cheerfulness: he turns this rather alarming character into a sweet, ebullient lunatic—albeit one who's hell on innocent bystanders. Also with Priscilla Presley, Robert Goulet, George Kennedy, Richard Griffiths, and O. J. Simpson.—T.R. (7/29/91) (Loews 19th Street East 6, U. A. East, Worldwide Cinemas, and Loews Festival. . . . ¶ Metro Cinema. Evenings only. . . . ¶ Art Greenwich Twin; through Aug. 8.)

Paris Is Burning—Jennie Livingston's documentary about gay black and Latino men who compete in drag balls is a beautiful piece of work—lively, intelligent, exploratory. The drag queens we see here seem to be holding up a mirror to the world of the empowered as they see it in movies, TV shows, and magazines. In the ballroom, some present themselves as elegant, glamorous women in designer outfits, and walk with the hip-swinging slouch of runway models, while others adopt more mundane personas: college students (of both sexes); military men; Wall Street businessmen; aristocrats at play, dressed for yachting or riding to hounds. The criteria by which all these turns are judged is verisimilitude—"realness." The material is almost too rich, too suggestive. Everything about the ball culture signifies so blatantly and so promiscuously that the movie induces a kind of semiotic daze. Livingston is smart enough not to reduce her subjects to the sum of their possible meanings, perhaps because she realizes that the way the drag performers manipulate image and fetishes and the iconography of popular culture is for many of them a sophisticated form of humor. The most self-aware of the gay men in this picture revel in the ironies of their social and sexual identities, and Livingston makes us appreciate the comic grace and the strange wisdom of that approach. Like all the best documentary filmmakers, she does her subjects the honor of allowing them to retain some of their mystery. Edited by Jonathan Oppenheim.—T.R. (3/25/91) (Lincoln Plaza; starting Aug. 9.)



Maria Montez (as twins) in "Cobra Woman"

Point Break—Keanu Reeves keeps a straight face and gets a few intentional laughs as Johnny Utah, an F.B.I. agent searching for a band of surfer bank robbers. "My character is a total control freak," Reeves told an interviewer, "and the ocean beats him up and changes him." Actually, the director, Kathryn Bigelow, is the control freak. She maintains a tight hold on technical stuff (there are a couple of gorgeous skydiving scenes) while ignoring anything that's involving or spontaneous in character, emotion, or storytelling. She throws too much of the film to a gaseous adrenaline guru named Bodhi. A sixties holdover, Bodhi gets bad laughs, partly because Patrick Swayze plays him as if he were auditioning for the look-into-my-eyes school of acting. W. Peter Iliff wrote the script, from a story he concocted with Rick King. Gary Busey is Reeves' burly partner; Lori Petty is his girl.—M.S. (Cinema 3, and Criterion Center. . . . ¶ Chelsea Cinemas; through Aug. 8.)

The Private Life of Henry VIII (1933)—Charles Laughton as the robust gluttonous monarch; among the ladies he marries are Merle Oberon, Binnie Barnes, Wendy Barrie, and Elsa Lanchester. Alexander Korda directed this warhorse of the movie repertory, which is still alive and in good spirits. With Robert Donat and John Loder.—P.K. (Biograph Cinema; Aug. 11-12.)

Regarding Henry—Harrison Ford, hot-shot lawyer, takes bullets in the head and shoulder from a corner-market thief. He loses his memory and physical control, regains the ability to talk and walk, and discovers that his long-spurned wife (Annette Bening) and thirteen-year-old daughter (Mikki Allen) are all that's important to him. The writer, Jeffrey Abrams, combines feeble finger-pointing satire of the success-obsessed upper class with life lessons that are hard to swallow. They won't go down past the artificially induced lumps in the throat. The director, Mike Nichols, in his second attempt to wring tears and laughs from *haute bourgeois* marital dramedy, falls flatter than ever—he goes from "Heartburn" to filmmaking arrhythmia. With the exception of an eager beagle named Buddy, this is the worst-performed, limpest, least credible Nichols movie yet. While it purports to attack yuppie values, the hero fulfills the latest yuppie fantasy: chucking everything and starting from square one. A nice trick for those who can afford it.—M.S. (Angelika Film Center, Loews 19th Street East 6, Loews 34th Street Showplace, Loews Tower East, Guild, Worldwide Cinemas, and Loews 84th Street Sixplex.)

Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves—A dull, dutiful trek through the legend of the bandit of Sherwood Forest, who stole from the rich and gave to the poor. Watching this picture is about as much fun as paying taxes, and far less stirring emotionally. We never feel that anyone involved in making this multimillion-dollar, two-hour-and-twenty-one-minute spectacle had any real affection for the story. The screenplay, by Pen Densham and John Watson, is a mishmash of halfhearted dramatizations of episodes from the legend and equally halfhearted nods to contemporary attitudes. If the movie had an exuberant spirit—as the 1938 "Adventures of Robin Hood," with Errol Flynn, had, in near manic overabundance—we'd be more inclined to overlook the script's incoherence. But there's not much joy in evidence here. The direction, by Kevin Reynolds, is stolid and impersonal, and Kevin Costner seems miscast as Robin: he's not a forceful enough actor for this role. The merry men are an unmemorable lot; even Little John (Nick Brimble) and Friar Tuck (Michael McShane) don't make strong impressions, because they haven't been given anything interesting to do. (In this version, Little John *loses* his famous battle with Robin in the stream.) The audience seems to perk up only when Alan Rickman, as the villainous Sheriff of Nottingham, is on the screen. He gives a florid, theatrical performance—there's real glee in his malice. Also with Morgan Freeman, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Christian Slater, Michael Wincott, and Brian Blessed (who's so vivid in his brief scenes as Robin's father that we wish the movie were about him instead).—T.R. (7/1/91) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Baronet, Chelsea Cinemas, and Criterion Center.)

Roman Scandals (1933)—Posh and popular musical comedy, starring Eddie Cantor, with the luscious, ripe Ruth Etting, and Gloria Stuart, David Manners, Verree Teasdale, Alan Mowbray, Edward Arnold, and the Goldwyn Girls. They're a toothsome bunch of sirens in this one—parading in revealing dresses or just in long, blond, calendar-art wigs, and with their dances choreographed by Busby Berkeley. (It's easy to spot Lucille Ball and Paulette Goddard among them.) The picture has a wonderful, silvery bright light; the cinematographer, Gregg Toland, keeps everything sparkling—everything visual, that is. It's the star, Eddie Cantor, who's stale. The material is credited to half a dozen writers (including George S. Kaufman and Robert E. Sherwood, who wrote the stage version), but Cantor's material is one thudder after another. As the American who dreams himself back in ancient Rome, he's a limp presence, telegraphing how darling and naughty he is, especially when he sings and rolls his eyes. He can't seem to do anything but play the sissy who's always in panic. Frank Tuttle directed; the score, by Al Dubin and Harry Warren, includes "No More Love," which Ruth Etting sings, and "When We Build a Little Home."—P.K. (Public Theatre; Aug. 8.)

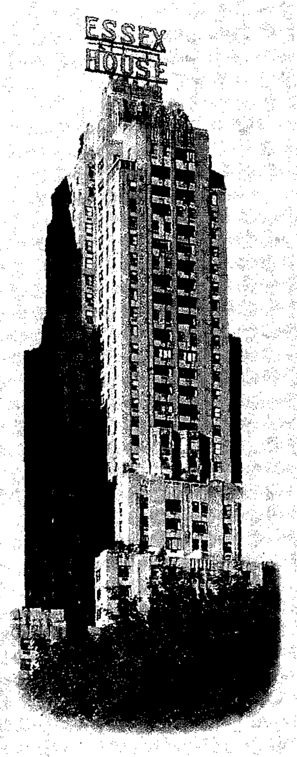
Terminator 2: Judgment Day—The killer cyborg who was played by Arnold Schwarzenegger in the original "Terminator" (1984) has returned—only this time he's the hero. The first film, which was written and directed by James Cameron, is one of the genre-movie classics of the eighties: a lean, witty science-fiction movie without great pretensions to significance. The sequel, also written (with William Wisher) and directed by Cameron, is far less satisfying. The picture is full of spectacular action sequences and dazzling special effects, but the narrative doesn't have the snap of the original's: it's lumbering and monotonous, and it carries a heavy-handed anti-nuke message. The old, Schwarzenegger-model Terminator (the T-800) has been superseded by a more advanced model, the T-1000 (Robert Patrick), who is sleeker and more versatile. T-800, who represented the ultimate in destructive technology in the first film, seems almost human here: compared to T-1000, he's a vulnerable guy (or guyoid). The whole movie is based on the insane conceit that Arnold Schwarzenegger is the *underdog*. That's a stretch.—T.R. (7/29/91) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Loews 19th Street East 6, Gemini, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Thelma & Louise—The heroines, played by Geena Davis (Thelma) and Susan Sarandon (Louise), are a couple of Arkansas women who set out for a weekend in the mountains and wind up speeding through the Southwest, on the run from the law. (Louise has murdered a man who tried to rape Thelma in a roadhouse parking lot.) The movie, written by Callie Khouri and directed by Ridley Scott, is designed to keep pushing the women farther and farther out there—past the point of no return, into the vanishing point of a vast Western landscape, and, finally, over the edge of the world. It's a pretty shameless outlaw fantasy; the feminist justification that the script provides for the heroines' behavior doesn't make their actions any less preposterous. But you can recognize the crudeness of the movie's narrative devices and still have an awfully good time. There's an exhilarating ease and intuitiveness in the way Davis and Sarandon work together, and the camera lingers on them as if it couldn't get enough of them. Scott's direction gives the story a pleasantly dreamy quality: when Thelma and Louise are on the road, the movie has the look of a mirage, a jewelled shimmer that keeps us half hypnotized. He turns Davis and Sarandon into outlaw princesses, and they're so vivid and likable that they carry us past the plot's most obvious contrivances; a little disbelief seems a small price to pay for being allowed to remain in their company.—T.R. (6/3/91) (Loews Village Theatre VII, 68th St. Playhouse, and Worldwide Cinemas. . . . ¶ Murray Hill Cinemas. Evenings only. . . . ¶ 57th St. Playhouse; through Aug. 8.)

Time After Time (1979)—Nicholas Meyer, the author of several popular novels (among them "The Seven-Per-Cent Solution," which he also adapted for the screen), turned director with this tall tale about H. G. Wells (Malcolm McDowell) and Jack the Ripper (David Warner). The movie doesn't fully succeed: McDowell's shy, flustered Wells doesn't fit the Wells of our recollections, and the Ripper, with his big, bony hands, is too frighteningly sociopathic to fit into the film's romantic framework. (His murders are gruesome.) But most of the plotting is ingenious, and soft-faced Mary Steenburgen, as the woman from twentieth-century San Francisco who is charmed by the Victorian Wells, makes it all semi-engaging. She's very sweet in an out-of-it way—a stoned cupcake—and she and McDowell seem to belong together in an enchanted playroom. With Patti D'Arbanville, who's terrific as a hooker, and Charles Cioffi, Joseph Maher, and Corey Feldman. From a story by Karl Alexander and Steve Hayes; the cinematography is by Paul Lohmann; the production design is by Edward C. Carfagno; the music is by Miklós Rózsa.—P.K. (Biograph Cinema; Aug. 8-10.)

Truly, Madly, Deeply—A lovely, original comedy about a young woman, named Nina (Juliet Stevenson), who is obsessed with the memory of her dead lover. The writer and director, Anthony Minghella, establishes an unusual, delicately varied mood, and the film moves gracefully from a realistic mode into a fantastic one. One night, Nina's lover, Jamie (Alan Rickman), reappears in her flat, and his presence seems perfectly natural to us: he has emerged from a setting that is already charged with the heroine's feelings for him. Once he's back, she has to confront, in the most concrete way, what it would really mean to live the rest of her life with a dead guy as her significant other: the movie is less a ghost story than a weird kind of domestic comedy. Minghella draws us into a fresh and startlingly humane vision of modern urban life; the details of the heroine's way of living always seem to point beyond themselves, and there's an emotional unity to everything we see. Minghella writes dialogue that sounds casual but somehow takes us straight to the heart of his work's larger concerns, and he directs the actors beautifully. Rickman is unexpectedly romantic here, and very funny besides. And Stevenson gives a radiant performance: she doesn't have a false moment, or a boring one, in the whole picture. Cinematography by Remi Adefarasin.—T.R. (5/6/91) (Quad Cinema.)

Trust—With Adrienne Shelly, Martin Donovan, Merritt Nelson, John MacKay, and Edie Falco; directed by Hal Hartley. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Angelika Film Center, and Carnegie Hall Cinema.)



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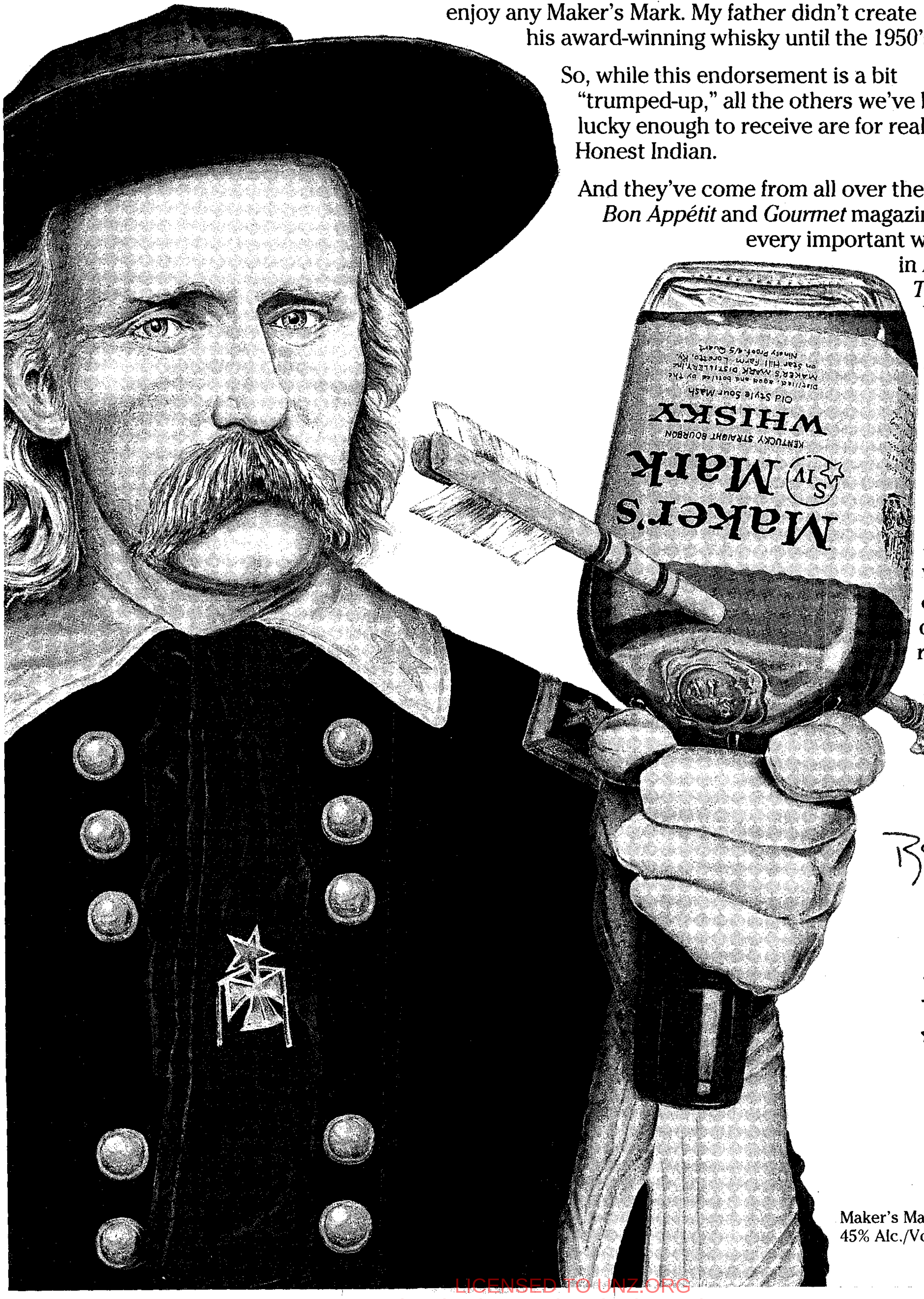

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THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

AFTER Slovenia and Croatia announced that each intended to declare its independence from Yugoslavia, but before either had actually declared it, Secretary of State James Baker, in a hurried visit to Yugoslavia, said that the breakup of the country "could have some very tragic consequences," and that the United States would not recognize the breakaway republics' independence "under any circumstances." The European Community delivered essentially the same message. The Slovenes and the Croatians paid no heed. Barricades went up; tanks rolled; there was blood in the streets; people began dying. With that, the State Department started to backpedal; its policy in favor of unity wasn't "rigid," it said, and Washington might be willing to recognize Slovenia and Croatia after all. The European Community retreated, too, though its members couldn't agree on the matter of recognition: it halted arms sales to Yugoslavia and suspended economic assistance.

Since the end of the Second World War, the political face of the globe has been transformed by decolonization, an often violent process that has typically pitted the poor, dark-skinned, and indigenous against the wealthy, light-skinned, and foreign—and East against West as well. Now international stability is being shaken by people yearning to break away not from a European imperial power but from a central "national" authority, and establish states of their own—the Kurds, the Latvians, the Lithuanians, the Estonians, to name only those secessionist movements which have attracted big headlines. Almost unnoticed has been the overthrow, in January, of the Somalian government, and the subsequent declaration by a tribal-based guerrilla army that northern Somalia, which was once British Somaliland, is an independent nation, separate from the rest of Somalia. Tamils are engaged in a bloody war of secession from Sri Lanka, and many of the inhabitants of East Timor, which was invaded and annexed by Indonesia in the mid-nineteen-seventies, are demanding to be separate (and equal) again. These peoples all have their own arguments for independence—that they were once a separate state and were incorporated into a larger entity against their will, for instance, or that they speak a different language or worship a different God from the people they are forced to live with—and the international community hasn't been able to decide which of their arguments amount to justification for secession.

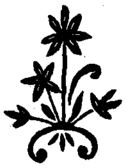
The first article of the United Nations Charter pledges "respect for the principle of . . . self-determination." But self-determination for whom? The principle is generally assumed to apply to people of the same "nation" or "nationality." But what is meant by "nation"? In "Nations and Nationalism Since 1780" the British historian Eric J. Hobsbawm has argued that attempts to establish objective criteria for nationhood on the basis of "language or ethnicity or a combination of criteria such as language, common territory, common history, cultural traits or whatever else" have all failed. Yet even if all concerned could agree on what a nation is, many questions would remain. The Afrikaners have a common heritage and a common language, but if they were to create a state independent of the rest of South Africa, should the world recognize it? Or what if Florida's Hispanics, with their common culture and language, were to decide that the state—or, at least, greater Miami—should become an independent Hispanic republic?

One criterion often invoked in discussing whether a people has the right to be recognized as an independent state is that of economic viability. Does the proposed new state have enough resources, human and natural, so that it will not be dependent on the international community for assistance? This viability argument has been used against the people of East Timor, for example, who number some six hundred thousand and live on half of a small island. But there are currently a number of recognized independent states that do not meet such a standard. Nor does size seem a proper gauge of viability: small does not necessarily mean economically or politically weak, as Luxembourg and Singapore demonstrate.

Some diplomats have argued that a new state should not be recognized unless there is reason to believe that it will be democratic and will protect the minorities within its borders. This, too, is setting a higher standard for new countries than is set for many

BOND
ONE WAY

current ones. There is, in fact, an abiding tension between democracy and most forms of nationalism, tolerance for dissent not having been the dominant feature, historically, of very many nationalist movements. In the case of Slovenia, it seems appropriate to ask whether its claim to independence should be accepted internationally, given the recently declared amnesty for Slovenians who collaborated with Hitler. But it is worth remembering that a new nation of Germany has been accepted by the international community, and this acceptance might be considered tantamount to forgiving the past.



The chief reason that many countries are reluctant to recognize Slovenian and Croatian independence seems, however, to be more pragmatic than principled. It is fear of what comes next: If the Slovenes and the Croatians are entitled to nation-states of their own, why aren't the Basques in Spain, the Slovaks in Czechoslovakia, and so on? This fear of setting a precedent by recognizing any separatist movement at all is particularly acute in Africa, many of whose "nations" came into being only during this century, their borders originally drawn by the European powers, with little, if any, regard to where different peoples lived or to the animosities between them. Today, the inviolability of boundaries is a sacred tenet of most African leaders; to revise any boundaries, they fear, would be to invite still more instability and violence than already exists. Even so, one new African country seems almost certain to come into being: Eritrea. After more than fifty years as an Italian colony, Eritrea was handed over to Ethiopia in 1952, with the provision that it would be an autonomous state in a federal union. Emperor Haile Selassie and a rubber-stamp legislature abrogated that provision in 1962, and put Eritrea under the direct rule of the Ethiopian government, in Addis Ababa. A group of Eritrean separatists went to war, and kept at it—against their Ethiopian rulers and in the face of a world community adamant in its insistence that Ethiopia remain unified. The United States now says that it will recognize an independent Eritrea if that is what a majority of Eritreans want—a referendum is to be held within the next two years—and it seems unlikely that the United Nations will raise serious objections.

Why is the notion of an independent Eritrea acceptable now? Not because Eritrea is a homogeneous "nation," consisting of people who speak the same language. Indeed, there are nine ethnic groups in Eritrea, speaking nine different languages, and there are both Christians and Muslims. Moreover, there is no guarantee that Eritrea will be a democratic state that respects minorities, just as there is no guarantee that an independent Slovenia or Croatia or Estonia would be. The change in the international attitude toward Eritrea can be explained in one word—"war." The new Ethiopian government—formed after rebel forces ousted the Marxist dictator, Mengistu Haile Mariam, in May—and many foreign governments as well feel that thirty years of fighting has "earned" the Eritreans a right to self-determination. Besides, no one wants another thirty years of fighting. Something that the international community does not like to acknowledge is that often the main factor in determining when a "nation" shall be recognized as such is the degree to which it is willing to use violence to gain its independence.

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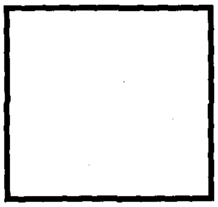
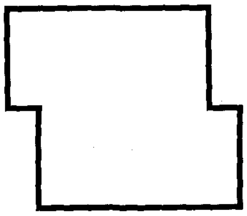
Jolt

HERE, in schematic plan, is the New York City public-school classroom as it has existed for most of the century:



And here, in schematic plan, is a design for one of the *new* New York City public-school classrooms—a design that will probably last into the new century:



And here, in more or less schematic plan—or, at least, in stripped-down, instant oral history—is the story of how that little asymmetrical push off center happened and what the people who did the pushing hope its consequences will be for New York City schoolchildren. This lesson will require some knowledge of the Wicks Law, ULURP, the fiscal crisis of the nineties, the fiscal crisis of the seventies, the utopian educational thinking of the sixties, the motto of the Army Corps of Engineers, and the continuing multipurpose, user-friendly power of chalk and blackboard. So straighten up, you there in the back, and pay attention.

One of the things special to the New York City public-school system is that its schools have usually been built to the design of a simple, easily reproducible template, known as a "prototype," which, of course, saves the city the expense of coming up with a fresh set of architectural plans every time it needs a new school. The first prototype was devised around 1898, by C. B. J. Snyder, an architect who was the city's first Superintendent of School Buildings. It was a so-called cookie-cutter plan—a single design that could be, and was, reproduced all over the city. Other prototypes, which included a U-shaped design, were devised in the nineteen-thirties, and some less wide-ranging prototypes have been developed since, as the need arose. Then, in the mid-eighties, certain farseeing folks at the Board of Education realized that there was going to have to be a new generation of schools, and that the city would need entirely new prototypes.

Rose Diamond (attended P.S. 85 and William Cullen Bryant High, both in Queens; is currently the director of the Office of Strategic Planning, Division of School Facilities): "In the mid-eighties, we saw that we were severely overcrowded, and needed new schools. Not many people realize it, but we're just about back at our all-time high—almost a million kids. Last year alone, we gained *twenty-five thousand* kids for the school system, mostly because of the boom in immigration. The problem was that going through normal channels would mean that it could take eight to ten years to build a single school, mostly because of Wicks and ULURP. What's ULURP? Oh, the uniform-land-use-review process, under which it can take three years to condemn a piece of land we want to build on." The Wicks Law, we already knew, is one of those arcane pieces of legislation which have an enormous effect on the lives of New Yorkers: it forces the city itself to contract out construction in four separate areas—carpentry, plumbing, electricity, heating—on each project. "We had hopes that maybe the legislature would pass a law allowing us to circumvent all that red tape in order to build new schools, but we thought that, no matter what, we'd better be ready to go immediately. So, before we knew whether the legislature would give us the authority, we put out an R.F.P.—that's a request for proposals—and started taking architects around to look at schools that were working and to figure out why they were. The first school we took them to was my old school—P.S. 85, in Queens, which goes back to the twenties. It has big, generous windows and nice detailing, but the most perceptive architects began to see that the design of its classrooms was what really made the school work."

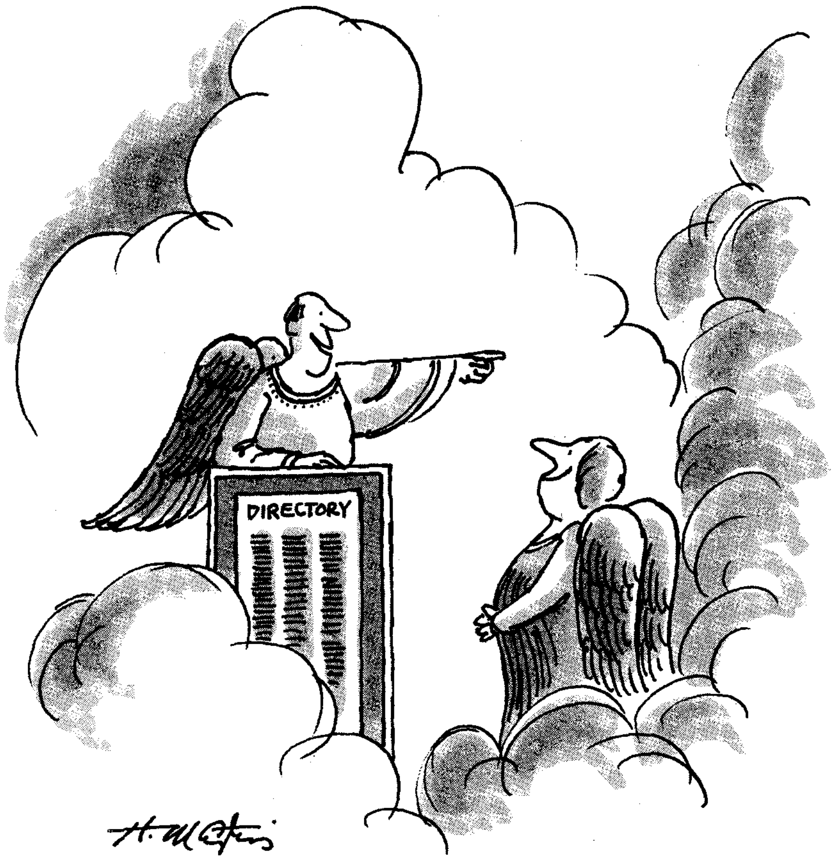
Peter Samton (attended P.S. 69 in Queens; P.S. 152, in Woodside; Stuyvesant High; is a senior partner in Gruzen Samton Steinglass, one of four architecture firms that were selected to design the new prototypes): "Among the things that impressed me—really stayed with me—from my time studying science at Stuyvesant was the way the cell is such a fundamental aspect of all that happens in life. And the classroom is the cell of the school system. Our firm studied the classroom carefully, and we decided to try to design the school around the classroom instead of wedging the classroom into the prototype school. I had kids in school, and George Luaces, another architect in the firm, had kids in school, and we had both been to public school in the city, so we started talking."

George Luaces (attended Junior High School 73 and Newtown High, both in Queens): "In the nineteen-sixties, the 'in' thing in educational design was the open classroom. There was a movement—it began in California, of course—that was predicated on infinite optimism. You never knew, these educators thought, what the school would be or what it could become—how many students there would be, or what they would want to do. And the idea was that a teacher should be able to change the personality of the schoolroom to match his or her own personality. So they built enormous open floor spaces, with movable partitions. Well, it worked in Beverly Hills, but it was a disaster in New York. Kids needed to focus, and the open classroom wouldn't let them. In the open classroom you would sometimes have three classes going on, and one disruptive or unhappy student could destroy the day for all three classes. So, very early in the process, even before we had the job, we started playing around with a simple square classroom shape."

Peter Samton: "And we said, 'What if you just give a jolt to the square?' That happened very early in the design process—in the first couple of weeks. It solved so many problems at once. A whole handful of problems solved with a single jolt! You could turn one of the protruding ends of the new shape into a bay window, which would enable you to have a lot more light in the classroom. You could have little bays to put the independent-study groups in, and a little niche to put the computers in. But at the same time the teacher would remain the real focus of the room, instead of being only a bit player. Just that simple change in shape—dividing the classroom in half and pushing the halves off center—could have big consequences for New York schools."

Rose Diamond: "Everybody at the Board of Ed liked the idea of this new classroom. We showed it to teachers and principals, and they were all crazy about it. Then, sort of surprisingly, the legislature came through with the new law. That formed the School Construction Authority, which could step around Wicks and ULURP and the rest of it, and just build schools. And we had new classroom prototypes ready for the new authority. The designs were ninety per cent completed."

Peter Samton: "Building out from that little asymmetrical cell, we decided to take six elementary-school projects that we'd been assigned and



"You'll find B. Altman over there, Madam, not far from Best & Company and Franklin Simon."

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apply to them a whole new kind of modular plan for elementary schools in New York. We called it a 'kit of parts'—four separate modules, which could be articulated on different sites in any number of flexible ways. There's a classroom module, an administration module, a commons module—that's where the gym and the lunchroom, and stuff, are—and a connector module, which connects the others and contains the lobby."

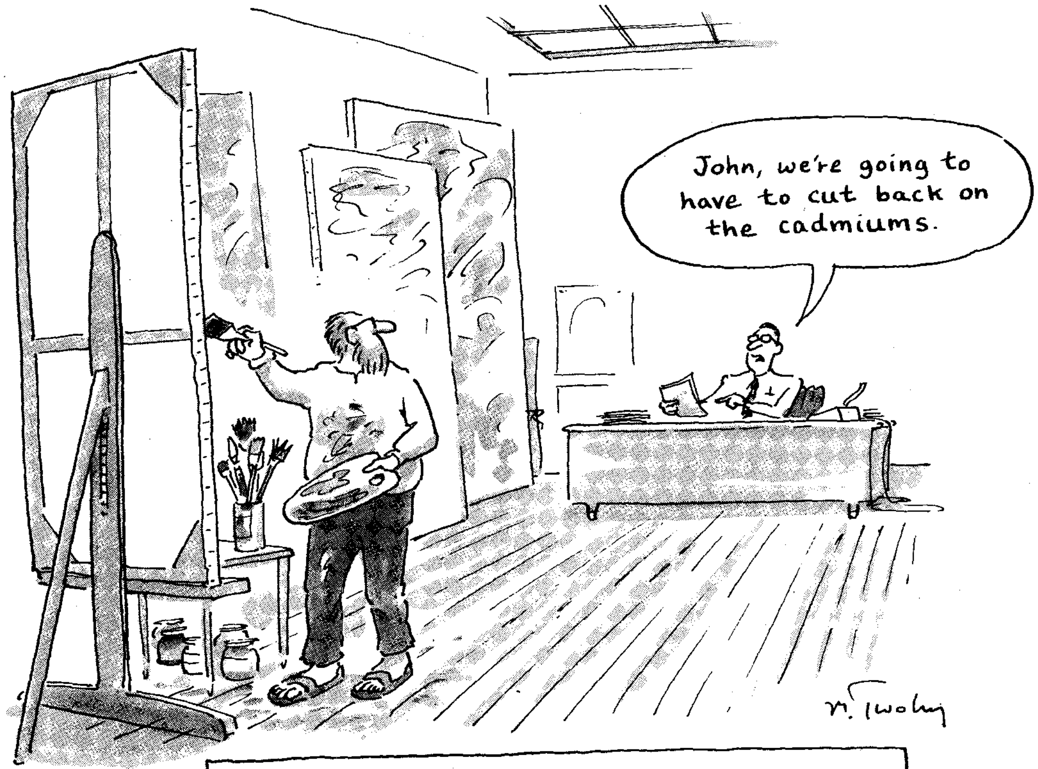
George Luaces: "The module system also lets you seal off one part of the building from another, so that you don't have to open up the whole building to let the community use the public parts of the school. Because we were worried about too much uniformity, one of the other things we did was to come up with an inexpensive system of tops—we call them hats—that could change according to the environment of the school. There's one school, next to Erasmus High, in Brooklyn, that wears a nice neo-Gothic hat, for instance; the schools wear different hats depending on the neighborhood."

Peter Samton: "We knew that the people at the Board of Ed were committed, but, frankly— Well, this is New York, and we weren't sure what the chances were of getting such an idealistic plan actually built. Then, in 1989, someone unique was found to head the School Construction Authority. He's an Army general named Charles E. Williams, who had once commanded a division of the Army Corps of Engineers. He's got a staff out in Queens now, and they are run like a military outfit. They have the real 'Let us try' attitude—that's the Corps motto. It's sort of funny, in a way—an organized military operation right there in the middle of Queens. They stand up straight, they don't stop for lunch, they hold everybody accountable, and they are going to build these schools. It's as if they thought there was a war on, and, in a way, there is."

Rose Diamond: "New schools will be opening next year as the end result of a process that started in 1988. That's unbelievable in New York City. And they're great schools, too—not quick, thrown-together designs but models for the future. It's unbelievable."

Peter Samton: "One of the interesting things about the new classroom is that, although it includes computers and televisions and bay windows, the focus of the schoolroom is still the blackboard. A teacher up there with a piece of slate and a lump of chalk. Well, not slate—our blackboards are actually porcelain enamel, which is less brittle than slate."

Rose Diamond: "We try not to call them blackboards. Chalkboards."


John, we're going to have to cut back on the cadmiums.

ACCOUNTANT-IN-RESIDENCE

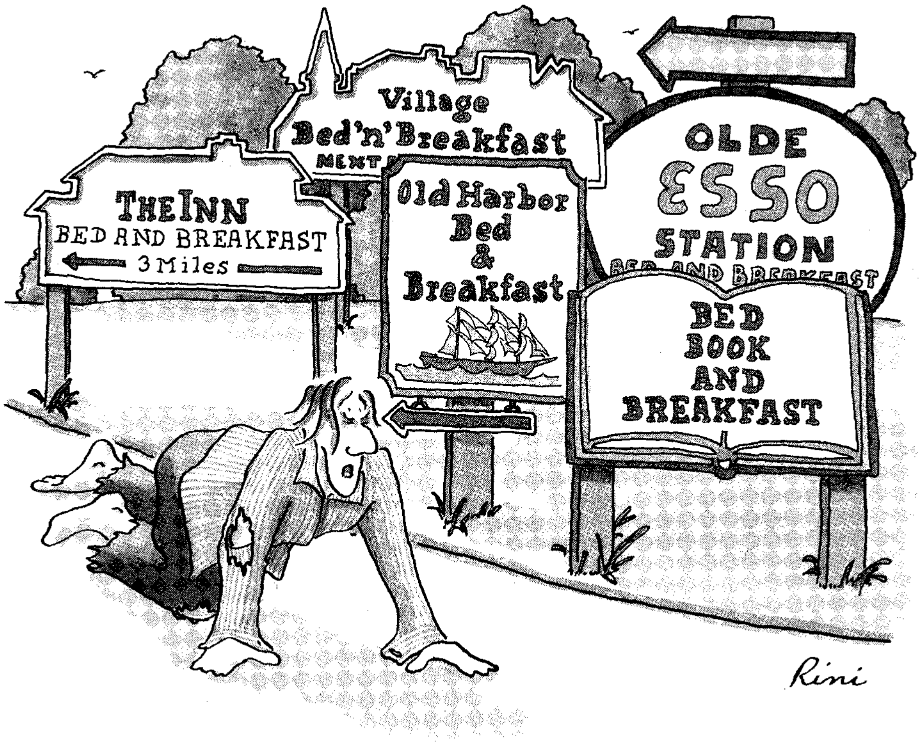
Home Team

A WOMAN we know writes:

I'm from Cleveland. I've lived in New York for some time now, but I still think of myself as a Clevelander, though I used to deny being one. When I was a kid, I used to say I was from Ohio rather than from Cleveland, because I thought Ohio sounded more interesting. Then I gave up trying to deny being a Clevelander and for a while was just depressed that I hadn't grown up somewhere more hip. That lasted even through those brief periods when Cleveland was marginally hip, such as the summer of 1974, when Gaylord Perry, pitching for the Indians, won fifteen games in a row.

Now I'm in an acceptance mode, and quite often this acceptance transforms itself into a sort of dorky, defensive boosterism. I'm married to someone who is from Oregon, and whenever we meet new people and they hear where he's from they say something like "Oregon! How neat!" Then they ask me where I'm from, and I say "Cleveland," and they say "Oh, the mistake on the lake!" or "Isn't that where the mayor set his hair on fire?" At such moments, I am compelled to mention that Cleveland is, objectively speaking, a great city. It's pretty, and it's interesting. At some point in the future, it will house the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. It has the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Cleveland Orchestra and the Cleveland Clinic, all of which everyone in Cleveland says are world famous. Also, everyone in Cleveland is really nice all the time.

Feeling defensive about *your* home town is something New Yorkers can't understand, since no one is defensive about being from New York. New York may make you feel



"Lunch! Lunch!"

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miserable, but being from New York never makes you feel like a dork. New York makes its residents feel arrogant and masterly and conceited. No one in Cleveland feels like that. Mostly, we become charmingly irrational about our home town even among ourselves. I lived in Oregon for a few years, and once when my father, who's a native Clevelander, too, came to visit I took him for a view of Mt. Hood—11,235 feet high, glacier-covered, sharply peaked. He stared at it for a moment, shrugged, waved a hand dismissively, and finally said, "Just like what we have in Cleveland."

My own boosterism reaches its peak every summer right after the All-Star break, when the embodiment of the Cleveland inferiority complex—I mean the Cleveland Indians—has once again drawn attention to itself. This is not just a matter of losing. All teams lose—look at the Red Sox—but most other teams lose in an engaging, soulful, idiosyncratic way, and they do win now and again, making their failures all the more poignant. The Indians are just lousy. No one likes them—not even Clevelanders—but we are naturally compelled to declare that we love the team and to be indignant when the *Times* runs what seems like its annual summer feature examining the Indians' ineptitude. This summer, the *Times* piece was headlined "DEMISE AND FALL OF THE INDIANS." It was really mean and unrelenting, and it took up most of a page of the sports section.

Then, right around the time "DEMISE AND FALL" ran, I began to notice something that suggested, against all logic, that Cleveland was about to be rehabilitated. Last year, every fourteen-year-old public-school kid in Manhattan was dressed in L.A. Raiders gear: Raiders jackets, Raiders T-shirts, Raiders caps. The Raiders were the currency of cool in the social set that is the ultimate arbiter of such things. This year, it's the Indians, who at this moment are in last place, twenty-four and a half games out of first; who have never won a division title; and who in the last thirty-one years have had more owners than winning seasons. The Indians probably accounted for less than a tenth of one per cent of all baseball-cap sales in the New York City area before 1991—and that less than a tenth of a per cent was probably attributable to displaced, dorkily defensive, boosterish Clevelanders—yet somehow the Indians have become this summer's chic team among the very tough-minded critics of insignia appropriateness. Kids in New York are now all wearing Indians gear—in particular, Indians baseball caps, which are navy blue with a red bill, a red button on the crown, and, in front, a large embroidered patch of Chief Wahoo, the goofy-looking Indian-chief team mascot.

When Chief Wahoo started showing up in my neighborhood, I was torn between rapture and doubt. Before I could enjoy being a native of a place that now had trendy status, I needed to be reassured. Was this a genuine upwelling of support and sympathy, or was it was some smart-alecky New York-style gesture of contempt? And why now? I started putting the question to everyone I saw wearing an Indians item—and that wasn't just kids anymore—and I got a variety of answers.

From a guy who works at my pharmacy, who must own a million Raiders items but took up with the Indians this May: "I don't know why I'm wearing this now. Something seized me."

From a kid hanging around my parking garage, wearing a brand-new Indians cap: "I like the color. I don't care about the Indians, but they have a sharp-looking cap."

From his friend, also in a brand-new Indians cap: "Because the Indians are No. 1!"

Me, incredulous: "They are?"

Kid, sneering: "Yeah, from the bottom up."

From a lanky young man at the corner of Eighty-third and Amsterdam: "I don't know. I guess I'm wearing it because it's stupid."

As I was crossing Times Square one afternoon, I saw a television crew from Korea setting up its cameras. When the key grip turned around, I realized he was wearing an Indians cap. This thrilled me. Even if, as my research was suggesting, the Indians trend is just a scornful, mocking gesture toward my home town and my home team, it's still Cleveland's moment in the sun, isn't it? I walked over to the crew and asked the grip why he was wearing the cap.

"I like the way it looks," he said.

"Do you like the Indians?"

"They're my favorite team."

Even I was surprised. "How come they're your favorite team? Don't you know they're bad?"

"Bad at what?"

"At baseball."

"At baseball?" he repeated, looking stunned. "Is that what they play?"

JOURNALS

FROM THE SEVENTIES AND EARLY EIGHTIES—I

THE *first day of the new year.* No toothache, and I wake feeling very happily horny. I trust the year will end this way.

We walk to the F.s', where we are shown home movies of the Cairo bazaar, and where much that is said seems to have been said before. My little camera is my memory, etc. Later, just before dark, I go to see S., a pleasant woman, with an open fire, who gives me whiskey. A drunken scene, for which I am heartily sorry.

I claim again that the Sunday *Times* derails me. Shovel snow, walk the dogs over the hill. Mary's sister calls, and when I say she's in Chappaqua she says, "Oh, I'm terribly sorry. Did they let her come home for Christmas?" "Chappaqua," I say, "is the next village." "Oh," says she, "I thought it was a rest home."

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Drinking with R. and S. and M., I seem to glimpse—no more—the fact that I can be difficult, ungainly, prone to flare up at trifling misunderstandings. I think of my brother, examine what I remember of his conduct and misconduct, since the end of his marriage resembled in some ways mine. He drank too much, and so do I, although I will not end up in a hospital. He seemed morbidly sensitive to any sort of discrimination. I remember his stamping off the playing field. When I asked him what was wrong he said that P. was cheating. We were playing touch football, bluff was half the game. Sorehead. I trust I don't do this. He would punish his wife by refusing to speak to her for a week or two. He merely punished himself, of course. We have the same blood, the same memories, and make, I suppose, the same mistakes. Who, after all, is that man who puts a dime in the lock of the public toilet and in this privacy drinks from a flask of vodka? It is I. When? Last month, last year, six years ago. I seem to have changed more than the airport. The imitation orange drink still geysers in a sort of glass showcase. The coffee is weak. The cock drawn on the toilet door seems a size smaller than it did last time. My hair is gray.

Are these the accents of contempt or is this my morbid sensibility? For example, I mix drinks and ask her to join me. "I have to wash the spinach," she says. The voice strikes me as unnatural, unwarm. I do not, of course, check on the truth of this. Once I said, "Let's fuck," and she said, "I have to find the baking potatoes." "I'll find the potatoes," I said, and I did, but when I returned to the bedroom she had dressed. Saturday night, I suggested again that she join me. I want someone to talk with, but I also feel that the sound of conversation might relax my son. Hours pass when the only voices one hears are electronic. To this invitation she says, "I have to go to the bathroom." "Well, won't you join me after you've been to the bathroom?" I say. She does, but she holds a book in front of her face. I talk about Lorca, whose poetry she is reading. "I will not be lectured about a book you have not read," says she, leaving the room. I did not intend to lecture her, but perhaps I mistook my tone of voice. Later—and I may now be as my brother was, moved in the stumbling and ungainly way of gin, half deaf, half blind, responding to some blow that was dealt so far in the past it can't be remembered—I say, "I won't listen to your shit." The raised voice will be heard by my son, and my good intentions have come to nothing. I climb another flight of stairs and watch something asinine on TV.

She is, to say the least, laconic this afternoon. At dusk, she takes the dog for a walk, the first in months. She returns at dark. She is excited. "I saw Josephine. I saw Josephine for the first time since Christmas, and I didn't have an apple or some sugar for her." Josephine is a lonely and unridden horse, owned by the superintendent in the

"And you—what star system are you from?"

next place. Now it is dark and cold, and Josephine's corral is perhaps a mile away. Mary takes an apple and some sugar and goes off into the winter night. Can I, having dived into the pond in October to pick some water lilies, claim that she is eccentric? I am pleased to see that she is moved and excited, but there is an unpleasant trace of skepticism in my thinking. Later, on TV, a polar bear is murdered. "They've shot the mother polar bear!" she cries; and she sobs. "They've shot the mother polar bear!" And I think that perhaps I should go on TV, that if I approached her through the tube on the shelf above the sink I might win her interest and her affection, but I would have to be disguised as a mother polar bear, or some other wild, innocent, and wronged animal.

FREEDOM'S JUST ANOTHER WORD FOR NOTHIN' LEFT TO LOSE.
THAT'S NICE. THREE TO FIVE YEARS.
Leo Cullum

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I think of my father, but nothing is accomplished. The image of him is an invention, not a memory, and an overly gentle invention. There was his full lower lip, wet with spit; his spit-wet cigarette; his hacking cough; the ash on his vest; and the shabby clothes he wore, left to him by dead friends. "Let's give Fred's suits to poor Mr. Cheever." I find in some old notes that my mother reported that he had, just before his death, written a long indictment of her—as a wife, a mother, a housekeeper, and a woman. I never saw the indictment. I suppose, uncharitably, that the effect on her would have been to fortify her self-righteousness. She had worked so hard to support a helpless old man, and her only reward was castigation. Sigh—how deep were her sighs. I have no idea of what their marriage was like, although I suspect that he worshipped her as my brother worshipped his choice and as perhaps I have worshipped mine. In my brother's case there was, I think, that rich blend of uxoriousness in which praise has a distinct aftertaste of bitterness, not to say loathing. I think that Mary was wounded years before I entered her life, and who is this ghost whose clothes I wear, whose voice I speak with. What were the cruelties of which I am accused? She may look for another lover; I certainly do. Are we, lying in our separate beds and our separate rooms, only two of millions or billions who wake a little before dawn each morning thinking hopefully that surely there is some man or woman who would be happy to lie at our sides? Happy for cheerful kissing, fucking, jokes, the day to come? I suppose we outnumber the felicitous by millions, and I must say that had I been given a loving and uncomplicated woman I might very well have run.

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The terrifying insularity of a married man and woman, standing figuratively toe to toe, throwing verbal blows at each other's eyes and genitals. Their environment is decorous, a part of their culture. The clothes they wear are suitable for this part of the world, this time of year, this income bracket. There are flowers (hothouse) on the table (inherited). Children sleep or lie awake in upstairs bedrooms. The man and woman seem as well rooted and native to this environment as the trees on the lawn, but at the height of their quarrel they seem to stand in some crater of the moon, some arid wilderness, some Sahara. Their insularity is incomprehensible. This is an abandoned place.

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I read the three stories and don't much like them. Phony modesty, perhaps. I've never much liked my work. The point is not to count my losses but to exploit what remains. I pick up "Crime and Punishment" and exclaim with pleasure over the opening sentence. Halfway down page 3, I close the book and watch TV. So the great books drop from our hands. Skating, I swing my arms, swing back happily into my youth, my childhood. The black ice on Braintree Dam, through which you could see the grasses. The instant the sun went down, the ice made a sound like cannon. And I think of the green valley of the Rorty and the hum of wild bees in the hall of the ruined castle. The sound was so loud you could hear it from the banks of the stream. I was thankful that I had heard nothing so romantic earlier in life. Mary swam in the stream, and the water seemed to magnify the size of her backside. My knees buckled.

•

Palm Sunday. Federico and I go to church. During the years that I've said my prayers here the priest's hair has turned white and his eyeglass prescription has been strengthened. J.L. smells of hair oil and toothpaste, a clash of scents. S. seems not beautiful, not at all, but she appears this morning to remind one powerfully of how beautiful she must have been thirty years ago. I remember, years ago, that she cried during the service. Why? The priest, a pleasant fellow, embraces me. I put the palm frond behind the clock, and my house seems truly blessed. I think of the swan, the gibbon, and other monogamous species. It does seem possible on this splendid afternoon that a man and a woman can love each other passionately until death do them part. A lovely hour in bed. Thank God, thank God, thank God is what I say on waking. Thank God.

•

That voice in the dark that gives me so much advice says, "You will not be as great as Picasso, because you are an alcoholic."

I have a homosexual dream, which deals muchly with the spirit. I do not know in whose arms I lie; I know only that he will take care of me. He will pay the bills, the taxes, balance the checking account, and drive the car through the storm. "Were you lovers?" she asked him. "I wouldn't use that word," he said. "It was more like an improvised contact sport, scored or punctuated by ejaculations."

It was two or a little later. He was woken by his wife, who was crying in her sleep. A heavy rain was falling. She called a man's name three times: "Matthew, Matthew, Matthew." Was this in love or anger, and who was Matthew? He knew two Matthews, but neither of them seemed threatening. She went on sobbing, and he thought how puerile was his concept of a woman. He had reduced this continent of memory and longing into a pussywussy, a yummy snatch. The loudness of the rain woke her. "You were crying," he said. "Yes," she said, "I had a nightmare." She moved away from him and fell asleep again.

•

I drink gin and read some stories of mine. There is the danger of repetition. Walking in the woods, I heard a man shouting, "Love! Valor! Compassion!" I followed the voice until I saw him. He was standing on a rock shouting the names of virtues to no one. He must have been mad. The difficulty here is that I wrote that scene ten years ago. Oho.

•

The hour between five and six is my best. It is dark. A few birds sing. I feel contented and loving. My discontents begin at seven, when light fills the room. I am unready for the day—unready to face it soberly, that is. Some days I would like to streak down to the pantry and pour a drink. I recite the incantations I recorded three years ago, and it was three years ago that I described the man who thought continuously of bottles. The situation is, among other things, repetitious. The hours between seven and ten, when I begin to drink, are the worst. I could take a Miltown, but I do not. Is this the sort of stupidity in which I used to catch my brother? I would like to pray, but to whom—some God of the Sunday-school classroom? Some provincial king whose prerogatives and rites remain unclear? I am afraid of cars, planes, boats, snakes, stray dogs, falling leaves, extension ladders, and the sound of the wind in the chimney; Dr. Gaspoden, I am afraid of the wind in the chimney. I sleep off my hooch after lunch and very often wake feeling content once more, and loving, although I do not work. Swimming is the apex of the day, its heart, and after this—night is falling—I am stoned but serene. So I sleep and dream until five.

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It seems to me extraordinary that Mary should have summered here every year of her life; that here is a place, a hill, a dozen simple cottages, and a mountain view that she can return to and find, at least in spirit, unchanged. The famous gardens are dead and so is the gardener. A few roses bloom, choked with weeds, and the three greenhouses have lost some of their panes from the weight of snow, but who any longer wants catalogues of ruin, who any longer studies the sadness of fallen greenhouses? The mysterious spirit of the place—I think it mysterious—remains. There are, here and there, Charlie's violin music, Bertha's second-year German grammar, moldy copies of the *Vassarion*, and Grandpa's telescope. Things of the past outnumber the new toaster, the new coffee machine, and the new refrigerator. Walking up from the beach, we are unique as one can only be in the summer. Who are they? They are the W.s, and everybody else is less secure, intelligent, and interesting.

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Thirty years ago, when we were courting, I used to leave the guesthouse, where everyone seemed asleep,

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THE BIG FISH

Set truth to music and you get the sea
  Slowly at first, seeping under the door:
Whispering insistencies of foam,
  Soft sucking sounds, soak into the carpet
Which is blue, figured with flowers
  And Euclidean birds escaped from books.

After a while you move about the room
  Wet to the ankles, sloshing as you walk,
Distracted by the rhythmic beating at the door
  And the smell of salt, and the black muck silt
That glitters even as the lamp shorts out
  Revealing what might be moonlight—
A luminous, fluent refraction
  Wiggling through the watery windows.

Sea stars and horseshoe crabs with radiant
  Or bisected symmetries scuttle in
Across the carpet, under easy chairs; they knock
  Against the coffee table's sunken legs
And touch at your toes as if they might be
  Succulent and essential morsels.

The music is ancient and simple
  And terrifying: the embroidered birds
Of your canny, dry considerations
  Never sang like this, never managed such

• •

Motile, saline chanteys, no.
And now the fish pluck your buttons off,
The octopus walks away in your trousers,
And mussels make their beds amongst your shoes.

You say a deep-blue *Ave Mare* as you breathe
Strange and easy while the current swells,
Lifts and pulls you, lifts your heart,
Lifts and floats it so that you become
The buoyant core of your veracious room,
The moist monster poised in its archaic dream.

Once you thought it best only to live
At the sea's edge, to listen as kelp tongues
And tide-tumbled smoothed shards of porcelain
Compared their histories, while you took notes;
And that sea-glass calculus seemed true enough.
But who standing now where the shore keeps time
Will hear the merest rumor of your sunken house,
Or, multiplying atmospheres, guess your deep appropriate form?

He will not know what way you move
In the phosphorescent decorations of the dark:
He will not know how you dispose,
By an arrangement of fins, his own profound
Dumb adumbration of the blood's first beat
Beneath the singsong surface of the sea.

—Blake Leland

•

and walk, naked, through the woods to this cottage, where we made love. Thirty years later, I still want to make love, but I am given no encouragement and my drive is not great enough to overwhelm the few bitter things that are said.

•

I think, yesterday morning, that I can bring it off: I mean a book. Try, try.

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New York, Moscow, Tbilisi, Leningrad, Moscow, New York. I have the jet blues as well as the booze fight. It is not that I have difficulty recalling the trip. It is that I cannot always give my recollection significance. A wicked man, asleep on a 707 halfway across the Atlantic, seems a figure of the purest innocence. The stale sandwiches in the London in-transit lounge. We go to the Bolshoi for one of those old-fashioned vaudeville performances—an orchestra, a recitation, a mezzo-soprano. I nearly fall asleep. Waking before dawn, I have the traveller's blues. If there is a knock on the door shall I jump out of the window? There are no exits, fire escapes, or stairs in the Ukraine, and in case of fire we will roast. I drink vodka for breakfast, and we fly to Tbilisi. The first feast is with a family, and all the toasts stress this. The oldest man is toasted first, then the youngest. I find this very moving. The next feast is in the mountains near the Turkish border. I see two women walking along the road with bunches of autumn leaves. Are they going to make medicinal tea or are they going to put the leaves in a vase on a table? Geese, pigs, cows, and sheep wander over the road. A bus collides with a bull. We come to the center of the province, a place of the most outstanding bleakness. This is what Russian literature and Russian song are about. In the distance are the mountains covered with snow. It is dusk in the corridors of the headquarters of the Central Committee. The clocks are broken. The toilet is smeared with shit and urine. In the main square there is a statue of Lenin and there is a cow. So we drive up into the mountains for our feast. The next feast is at the N.s', where Mrs. N. spills wine on the tablecloth. When we reach Leningrad it is, at 3 P.M., dusk. The city, this time, seems shabby and depressing. The Winter Palace badly needs a coat of paint. We have a quarrel on the banks of the Neva, the only quarrel during this trip. I love my son so intensely that it amounts to a capillary disturbance. I also loved his brother, but that was different. We rush around Leningrad, dine at the Europa, where I find the dancers depressing. Why is this? I think the tall woman with the short man has on her face a look of implacable sexual discontent. He seems to be giving her a dry fuck. Is this because my bladder is inflamed with vodka? We go to the opera, and hook the midnight train. The Kremlin in the morning. The disinfected atmosphere of most offices, except for the shoeshine machine. Our guide seems thrown into life with a more desirable velocity than I enjoy. He is definitely very engaging; definitely engaged. There is a cast in his right eye that makes him seem irresistible. I think that I may faint. The table seems to swim.

The Winter Palace at six. A dark night on the Neva. Snow. Will I have vertigo on the grand staircase, as I once did in Washington? I want a drink, a cigarette, a friend, a more intimate source of light and heat. I think of myself sitting on the B.s' sofa with a second or third drink, chatting merrily with Mrs. X in French. Now I experience a terrifying sense of nothingness. Would such a life be tolerable? Would I not cut my throat? Is this what my friends in the prison experience? So we drive back through the snow to the hotel, where I drink half a glass of vodka and dress for the opera.

Why is it so difficult for me to bring into focus the image of a young man with thick eyelashes on the plane from Tbilisi? Is this a temperamental infirmity, a national trait, a sort of neurosis? Why, watching some kilted pipers crossing a bridge in Ireland, did I feel that my life was passing by? What is this unhappy mystery?

The flight back from Moscow is painful. A gray day. If I feel well enough tomorrow I must do the eight stories.

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In town with D. His 65th birthday. The face is strong, his gray hair is long. We do not mention his remarkable wife, who choked to death during lunch a month ago. His mistress in Australia has called him and asked him to marry her, and I suppose he will. The barbershop at the Biltmore has been cut in half, and there are only three barbers on the job. Do people get their hair cut elsewhere or don't they get it cut at all? One used to have to wait, reading copies of *The Tatler*. What is the significance of a dying barbershop? The barbers are all old friends, and we talk in Italian. I spend a dollar in tips for being whisk-broomed and drink a Martini at the bar, where there is a new, and more attractive, painting of a nude. The face seems unusually sensitive. But as I walk up Madison Avenue the city escapes me. What has happened to this place where I used so happily to pound the sidewalks? Where has my city gone, where shall I look for it? In the Playboy Club, the Century Club, the Princeton Club, or the Links? In the steam room at the Biltmore, in L.'s panelled apartment, in the skating rink, in the Park, in the Plaza, on the walks where someone behind me makes tonguing noises with his or her mouth? I don't look. I know the city well, why does it not know me? A pair of well-filled boots, pretty legs, a tossed head. A restaurant where all the lights are pink, and so my hands are pink, and pink is the face of my friend. Everybody is pink. Fifteen or twenty men stand at the urinal in Grand Central. Their looks are solicitous, alert, sometimes wistful. They use the polished marble as a glass for pickups, and most of them are fondling or pulling their various-sized and -colored cocks. Why does the sight of fifteen or twenty men jerking off seem more significant than the string music in the Palm Court? One young and attractive man, the point of contact concealed by a raincoat, is making an accelerated jerking, as if he was approaching juice time. These are the darkest days of the year, and when the 3:40 pulls out of the tunnel into the Bronx it is nearly dark, although very few lights burn in the new housing developments. Perhaps everyone is still at work. By the time we reach the river, it is dark, and the only water traffic is barges and tugs. When I was younger I would wonder about the tug crews, wonder about what they would have for supper. I no longer much care. In the early dark the barges seem like mangrove islands: shoal water—you could wreck your boat. Three men behind me are talking loudly about the collapse of the government, the railroads, the U.N. Is this really the end of a world, as they seem to think it is? The men beside me seem so gored and emasculated by time that I look away. One has no gray in his hair, so I suppose he is rather young. His face is finely lined, rather like a woman's. He opens his briefcase busily, but it contains nothing but a printed brochure. Will such a weary face be welcomed anywhere? The face seems incapable of any sensual provocation or response. But when it is time for him to leave he jauntily slaps on a sealskin hat with a bright feather cockade and braces his shoulders in his raincoat. He's ready for the next round. I wanna go home, I wanna go home. I've lunched and had my hair cut, and now I am exhausted and I wanna go home.

•

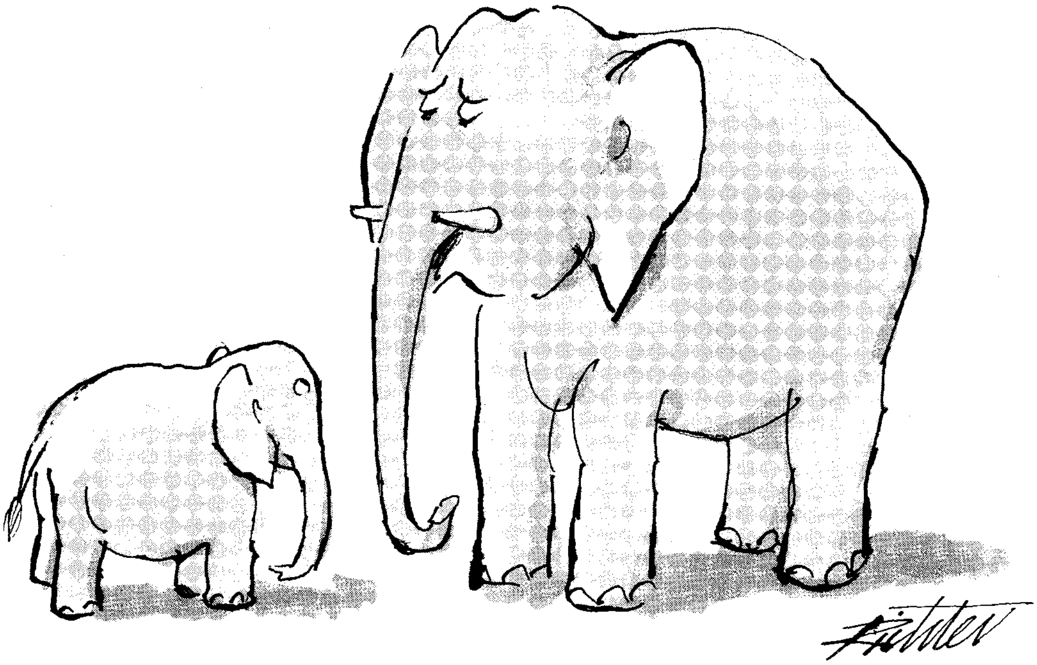
My daughter says that our dinner table is like a shark tank. I go into a spin. I am not a shark; I am a dolphin. Mary is the shark. Etc. But what we stumble into is the banality of family situations. As for Susie, she makes the error of daring not to have been invented by me, of laughing at the wrong times, and of speaking lines I have not written. Does this prove I am incapable of love, or can love only myself?

•

I read "Bullet Park," which is an extract of my most intimate feelings, and wonder why it should have antagonized Broyard. Is there some discernible falling off, some trace of my struggle with alcohol and age? It is a struggle, but I have come through before, and pray that I will bring it off again.

•

In the middle of Sunday afternoon I think that perhaps my dishevelled and unpunctual muse will return. I seem to stand above the characters at hand as if they were pawns on a chessboard. Chess, however, is a game I never learned to play. My mind approaches some unsavory matters, and I put Serkin on the record-player and seem to enter into some community of accomplished men, who are passionately concerned with their deepest intuitions about love and death. The music, especially the Schubert, sounds like a powerful narrative. I see the stream, the Roman bridge, the leaves on the trees, the flaxen-haired woman leaning from her casement window. The dialogues are much more forceful and moving than any dialogue in



"Yes, son, we're Republicans."

any of the books on my table. I would like the story to be called "Glad Tidings," but I'm not sure where I go from there.

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Good Friday. No mourning doves sing; no bells ring.

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I've put it down before, and I'll put it down again, but when I remember my family I always remember their backs. They were always indignantly leaving places, and I was always the last to go. They were always stamping out of concert halls, sports events, theatres, restaurants, and stores. "If Koussevitzky thinks I'll sit through that . . ."; "That umpire is a crook"; "This play is filthy"; "I didn't like the way that waiter looked at me" etc. They saw almost nothing to its completion, and that's the way I remember them: heading for an exit. It has occurred to me that they may have suffered terribly from claustrophobia and disguised this madness with moral indignation.

In the summer my father used to play three or four holes of golf before breakfast, before he went to work. I sometimes went along with him. The links were only a short walk from the house. The course was set above the river, and from the first fairway he played you could see down to Travertine and the blue water of the bay. Early one morning, he noticed something hanging from a tree in the woods beside the fairway. He thought it was perhaps some clothing left there by the lovers who used the woods at night. As he walked down the grass, he saw it was the body of a man. The face was swollen and contorted, but he recognized his old friend Harry Dobson. He cut down the body with a pocketknife and called Dr. Henry from the nearest house, although he should have called the police. He gave away his clubs that afternoon and never played golf again.

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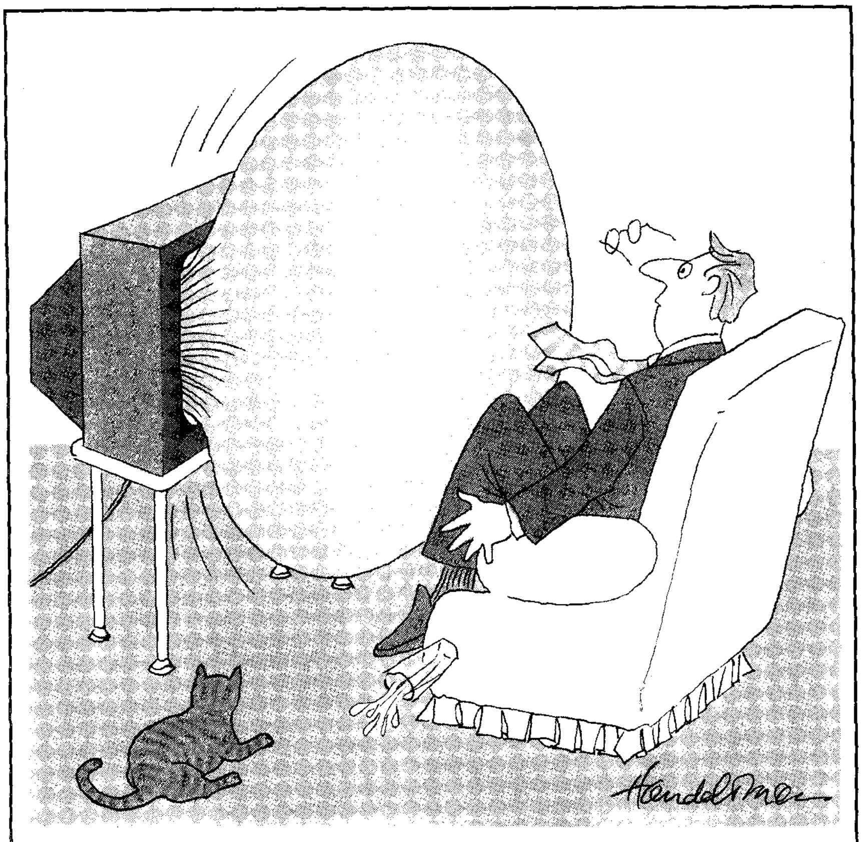
NEEDED INVENTIONS:
AN AIR BAG TO PROTECT THE VIEWER
AGAINST A REALLY LOUSY PROGRAM.

In my dreams or reveries—I'm not sure which—I walk along the carriage drive at Yaddo with a man about whom I know absolutely nothing beyond the fact that he wears a dark-blue cashmere suit. He bumps into me in a suggestive and amorous way, and I do not protest. He puts his arm around my shoulders and says how much he likes me, and I say that I like him. We disappear into the woods. I'm not quite sure what happens, but it's profoundly gratifying. We dine at different tables, keenly and happily aware of each other. There is nothing flamboyant. We observe the force of scandal. We approach his room by different stairways and spend the night together. I also imagine us holding hands in a movie. Since, as I see it, nothing of the sort could possibly take place in fact, what room has it in my sleep? There is no such man. With the exception of Endymion, the only homosexuals I've seen there aroused my vigorous uninterest. X was silly and narcissistic, Y had a dental plate that clacked, and Z spit when he spoke. Their sexual tastes seemed to be the product of vanity, stupidity, and bad luck. But dreaming gives me the license to invent this anonymous and manly spirit in a cashmere suit. Is this narcissism; is this some impediment of my nature, put there by my unhappiness with my father? How the light of day, the fire, bolsters and hones my ego. With my eyes closed in sleep I seem to be a very different man. The moral quality of light.

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The incantation this morning is that I can cure myself. The problem is, can I? Is this thing bigger than either of us, Mabel?

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Wake at three in the morning and seem to have in my mouth that single grain of sand, that hair, that means my life. Oh, I will have it all back, once more—the work, the girls, and money to burn. Things are less golden at seven.

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Sauced, I speculate on a homosexual romance in prison. Sober, it doesn't seem to amount to much. Who would it be? A much younger man. Why would he find him beautiful? That the dynamism between youth and age was as powerful as the dynamism between men and women. That he feels the man shaken with the paroxysm of an orgasm, so like pain. They were both men, and the drama of sexual difference was lost. Stacy was hirsute, Johnny was smooth. He would not mention his infatuation to the psychiatrist. Why should he? Under the circumstances, or perhaps under any circumstances, it seemed most natural. Why should he consider it distorted, and root through his childhood to discover the origins of this distortion? He had hated his father, because his father was cruel, stupid, and dishonest. He had not loved his mother, because she did not allow this. There is the set piece about having been merely furloughed from his adolescence and its disorders. That they developed no expertise. They never kissed each other. They simply embraced, caressed, and fondled each other's genitals. Sodomy and fellatio were impossible for both of them. Stacy wondered if this was inhibition, repression, some bow to the society that had imprisoned him. Why wonder? He was content with this rudimentary horseplay, and by "content" I mean that when he was holding and being held by Johnny, the absorption of his flesh, his memory, and his spirit was complete. And then there is the scene in the visiting room with his wife and perhaps his children.

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Very sticky. I am given such a harrowing glance at dinner that I am nauseated. Why can't I bring this distemper into focus? Once, as I bent down to kiss her goodnight, she gave me a look of such revulsion that I felt ill. But I seem unable to bring to my feelings and my conduct as clear and strong a light as I would choose. With a disposition made up of suppurating wounds and miraculous cures, I seem unable to distinguish the force the past plays in my reactions. Am I nauseated because of something Mother did or is my nausea the reaction of a healthy man to a situation dominated by sickness? There is, of course, also the problem of drink. I clip the hedges and feel better. I watch with great interest a vulgar TV show. Waking, I ask if she would like me to meet her at the garage. Tears and hysteria.

I sit on the terrace, watching the clouds pass over, watching the night fall. What is the charm of these vaporous forms; why do they remind me of love and serenity? But look, look. There is no glass in his hand. Is it under the chair? Nope. Is it hidden in the flower bed? No, no. There is, for the moment, no glass within his reach.

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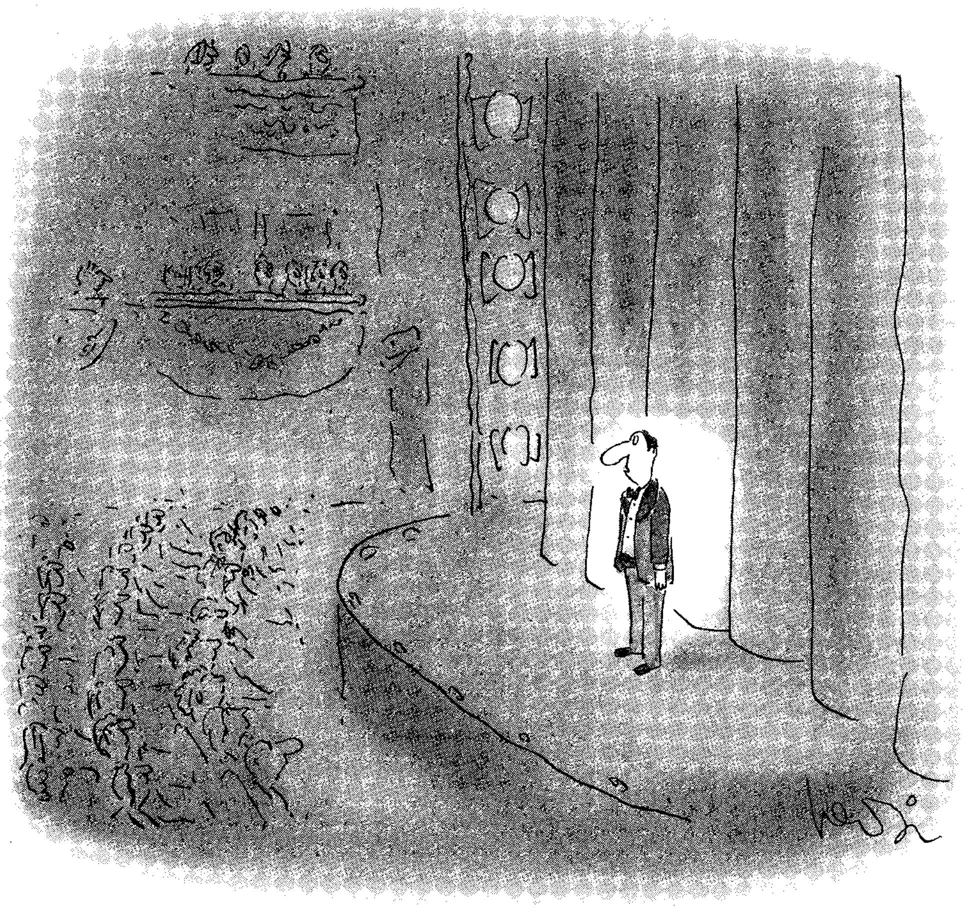
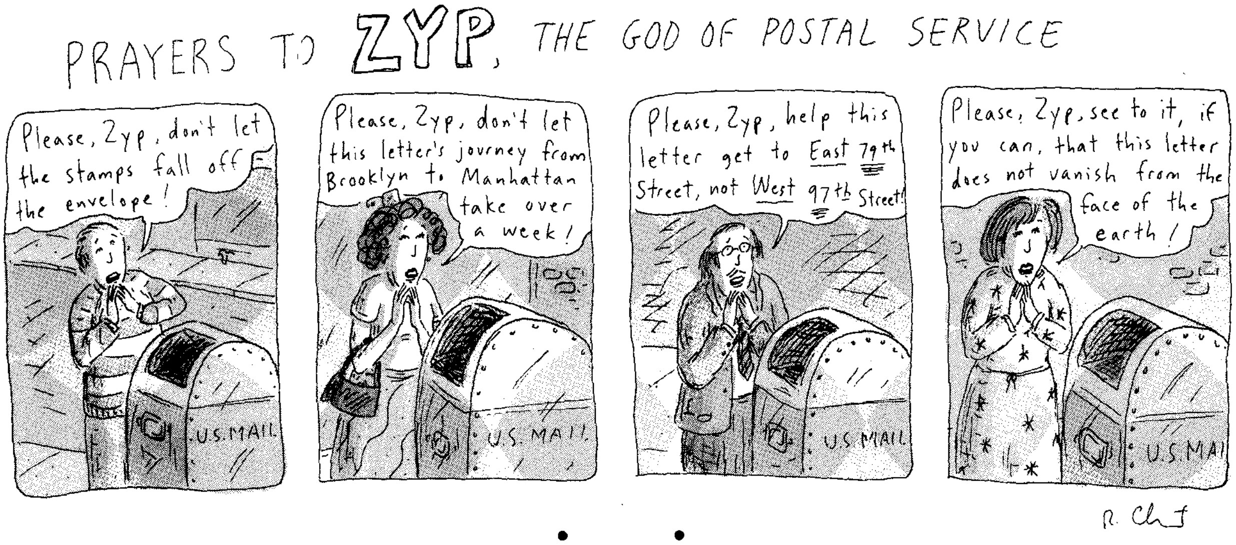
My cruel addiction begins sometimes at five, sometimes later. Sometimes before daybreak. On waking, I want a drink. I imagine that the water glass on the table beside my bed is filled with whiskey. Sometimes there is ice, sometimes none. To entertain myself, I then take one of my imaginary girls for a trip through some city. These excursions are highly educational. In Tokyo we go both to the National Museum and the Museum of Asiatic Art. We spend several days in Luxor. I've not seen H. in two years, and I find her hard to summon. I've not seen S. for two weeks, but she is usually with me these days. We are lovers; we joke; she bakes corn bread for breakfast. All through this tourism I am aware of the glass beside my bed, filled with imaginary whiskey. Things worsen at around seven. Now I can think of nothing but the taste of whiskey. Orange juice and coffee help a little, and I sit at the table sighing as my mother used to sigh. Also my brother. I can't remember my father sighing. I sigh and sigh. At about half past nine my hands begin to shake so that I can't hold a paper, or type correctly. At around ten I am in the pantry making my fix. Then my shaken carcass and my one-track mind are miraculously joined, and another day begins.

•

Yesterday my hands shook so that I could not type. In the morning I drank half a bottle of Courvoisier, there being nothing else in the house. In the afternoon I drank more than half a bottle of Bushmills. Early to bed without another drink, but there wasn't much left. This morning—a brilliant day for the first time in weeks—things are better, but I suffer from a slight psychological double vision: a melancholy at the edge of my consciousness that has no discernible



"Is there a doctor who accepts Medicaid in the house?"


PRAYERS TO ZYP, THE GOD OF POSTAL SERVICE
Please, Zyp, don't let the stamps fall off the envelope!
U.S. MAIL
Please, Zyp, don't let this letter's journey from Brooklyn to Manhattan take over a week!
U.S. MAIL
Please, Zyp, help this letter get to East 79th Street, not West 97th Street!
U.S. MAIL
Please, Zyp, see to it, if you can, that this letter does not vanish from the face of the earth!
U.S. MAI
R. Chast

• •

imagery. It is rather like a taste. I claim there is some connection between my need for drink and my need for love of some sort, and I'm determined to put it down, however clumsily.

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I have thought of taking a mistress, but they are not easy to come by and I am timid. I claim that my timidity is exacerbated by the situation. After a particularly bitter quarrel twenty years ago I stood in the garage, sobbing for love. We have no garage here but otherwise the situation is the same. I don't divorce, because I am afraid to—afraid of aloneness, alcoholism, and suicide. These rooms, these lawns, and the company of my son help to keep me alive. I cannot discuss these matters without provoking a venomous attack on my memory, my intellect, my sexual organs, and my bank account. I mean, I suppose, by all of this to justify my having humped the wrong people, but in some lights—the lights of day—I seem to have had little choice.

•

S. has, I know, a farm in Vermont and so I summon this. There is snow on the ground, but the paths are shovelled. It is dark. I am leaving. This is a heartbreaking separation. She is crying. But since I'm making the whole thing up, why don't I invent an arrival instead of a departure? I do. There is still snow on the ground; it is still dark. I come up the walk, carrying a suitcase. She greets me passionately. A fire is burning. It is I who cut the wood. We go directly upstairs, undress, and bound into bed. Then we dress and go back to the fire and have—this I've been waiting for—several drinks. Whiskey, I think. The conversation is about the progress I've made in my work. My depressions are over. I've come into a new way of life, a new cadence, a new enthusiasm. We go into the kitchen, and I talk about my work while she cooks calves' liver and bacon. What do I look like? My hair is white, my abdomen is flat, my back is straight. I am sixty-five, she is twenty-eight. After dinner we drink a little more whiskey and go to bed. It is snowing. I don't screw again, because once is all I'm up to these days. "Once is enough, darling," says she. In the morning, of course, she makes corn bread. I go to an outbuilding, where I work serenely until past noon. When I return, I find a note saying that she has gone to the village for groceries. I have a drink, a large Martini. When she returns I help bring in the groceries. After lunch we take a loving nap. Then I drive to the village and get the mail. Checks, love letters, honors, and invitations. I shovel the walks until dark, when we have the cocktail hour. Roast beef for dinner.

•

My daughter throws up her job and follows her husband to San Francisco. This pleases me intensely. Mary is in a loving spirit, and all is meadows and groves. B_{12} seems to help, although, as they say, one has to help oneself. After the shot I feel that the craving has diminished, and I run upstairs with the gin bottle to show her how little I have drunk. I seem to have forgotten that there was another bottle. For at least half a day I am convinced that all my problems can be traced back to a vitamin deficiency. Now with B_{12} I will be able to board trains, cross bridges, drive across the country. Mary is tender and loving these days, and why speculate on the fact that this might not go on forever? I do not drink after dinner for two nights and have two mornings of feeling like a man. I do not seek it for long, but how wonderful it is to see at least a vision of wholeness, including some mountains.

•

After planning to visit A.A. for twenty years, I finally make it. The meeting is in the parish house of the Congregational church. This is a new building—by that I mean that the architecture is mildly unconventional. The main room is very high-peaked, with rafters, and globe lights are suspended from long rods—a little like the traffic lights at a busy intersection. The table where we sit, however, is lighted by candles. We are fifteen or twenty, come to confess the vice of drinking. One by one we give our first names and confess to being alcoholic. But the essence of the meeting, and there must be one, escapes me. It seems neither sad nor heartening. One woman describes the neglect her children endured when she was drinking. One describes a five-day binge in which she locked herself into a room and did nothing but drink. This was after her husband, a mischief at the local parties, blew off most of his head. The man beside her describes his binge—six

BREAKFAST ROOM

1.

The words have stirred, always, a sudden
surge of light, an air of new beginnings, something
neat and simple, a space
both elemental and domestic—because, perhaps,
they bear a sort of innocent sheen
of privilege, a room so set apart
for an event so ordinary, a glimmer of ritual
where mostly we know only broken facts, bits and pieces
stumbling numbly into one another. Here
is a murmur of voices, discretion's homely music
of spoons on saucers, the decent movements
people make around each other—eager to
let themselves become themselves again
after the uncertain journeys of the night. Or it may be
the secret knowing smiles that lovers save, sitting
to face one another in their quaint conspiracy
of hope and saying, *Pass the milk, please,* but meaning
Nothing has ever pleased me more
than how your naked shoulders and the small of your back
lay on my spread hands; your earlobe, tongue, wide eyes
entering half frightened mine in the dark.

2.

And in Bonnard's "The Breakfast Room" you'll see
the impeccable ordinary order he finds in things: white,
slate blue, the tablecloth bears its own still-life
of teapot, cream pitcher, sugar bowl, china cup
and scalloped saucer, the half glass of raspberry juice,
bread in yellow napkins, that heaped dish
of purple figs and a peach. And, as if
accidental by the French windows—
through which morning light
passes its binding declarative sentence
on every detail—a woman stands
almost out of the picture, her back
against the patterned drapes, dressed to go out
and giving a last look back, her eyes and strict lips
asking directly, *You think this*
changes anything? Yet she too
is part of this stillness, this sense that things
are about to achieve
illumination. Beyond the window
a stone balustrade, and beyond that
nature's blue-green tangle tangles
with the light that's melting one thing
into another—blue, scrubbed green, straw gold,
a house with a white-and-lilac roof
at the dead end of a sun-streaked avenue
on which the trees are
blobs of turquoise. Inside and quite distinct, that woman
is held to her last look back, her
sudden pulse beat shaking
all the orderly arrangements
of the table. Through its ambivalence of light,
its double tongue of detail and the world at large,
we are brought into the picture, into a kingdom
we might find under our noses: morning's
nourishment and necessary peace; a pause
on the brink of something
always edging
into shape, about to happen.

—Eamon Grennan

• •

months. He came to in the county mental hospital. Three of the confessors have been in mental hospitals, and one of them is still a patient. I suppose he's furloughed for the night. The long speech I have prepared seems out of order and I simply say that I am sometimes presented with situations for which I am so poorly prepared that I have to drink. I don't mention my visit to the Kremlin, but this is what I mean. We stand and recite the Lord's Prayer. I am introduced to the chairman, who responds by saying that we do not use last names. Perhaps I am imperceptive from having drunk too much, or perhaps the meeting is as dreary as I find it.

I'm not cured but I'm definitely better. At ten o'clock I still know where the bottles in the pantry are, and what they contain.

•

Another morning when I seem to see the mountains, seem at least prepared to see them. I don't know if this is blessedness, luck, or B_{12}. Yesterday's fine morning was countered by an equally squalid afternoon. I don't know why. Bad Scotch, the humidity, some chemical instability in my lights and vitals that makes the lows equal the highs.

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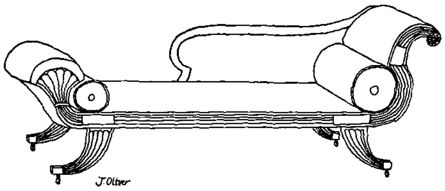
I want to sleep. I seem to make the remark with some serenity. I am tired of worrying about constipation, homosexuality, alcoholism, and brooding on what a gay bar must be like. Are they filled with scented hobgoblins, girlish youths, stern beauties? I will never know. I desire women and sometimes men, but shouldn't I exploit my sensuality rather than lash myself until I bleed? I will never, of course, be at peace with myself, but some of these border skirmishes seem uncalled-for.



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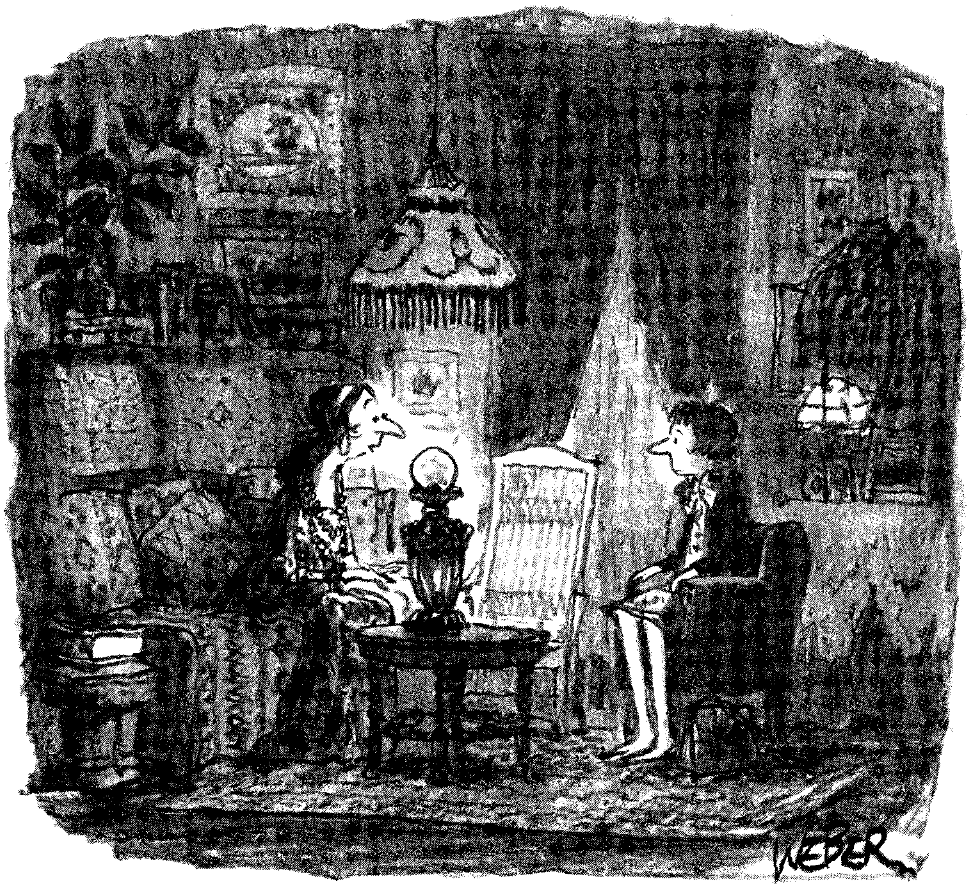
Vodka for breakfast. Mary mentions her mother for the third time in thirty-five years. "I wanted a Teddy bear for Christmas, and she said I was too old. She pronounced 'doll' with the same terribly Massachusetts accent you have." So we are people we have never met.

•

I think of the ruses and maneuvers I have used to stay away from the bottle. I have painted the kitchen. I have painted the porch. I have painted a bedroom. I have raked leaves on a windy day, scythed a field, sat in the balconies of movie theatres watching bad pictures, watched TV, walked, cut grass, cut and split wood, made telephone calls, taken massive shots of vitamins and three kinds of tranquillizers, but the singing of the bottles in the pantry is still seductive.



"How frustrating. The crystal ball is down again."

•

I wake with a bleeding nose and think that the Godhead is continence, common sense, and work. I wish I could harness, channel, and exploit the love I feel for my son into industriousness and temperance. I remember walking the road in Saratoga on a winter night, thrilled by my conviction in the Divinity.

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The gin bottle, the gin bottle. This is painful to record. The gin bottle is empty. I go to the post office and stay away from the gin shop. "If you drink you'll kill yourself," says my son. His eyes are filled with tears. "Listen," say I. "If I thought it would benefit you I'd jump off a ten-story building." He doesn't want that, and there isn't a ten-story building in the village. I drive up the hill to get the mail and make a detour to the gin store. I hide the bottle under the car seat. We swim, and I wonder how I will get the bottle from the car to the house. I read while brooding on this problem. When I think that my beloved son has gone upstairs, I hide the bottle by the side of the house and lace my iced tea. He practices his driving in a neighborhood I've never seen before. These are the hills above the river. The houses are, without exception, small, and close together, and are, without exception, neatly painted and maintained with conspicuous love. Even the wax tulips in the window boxes, the parched lawns, seem produced, tended, and enjoyed with a deep sense of love. Children play games in the street. There is a shrillness to their voices, which seems to heighten as it grows dark. People sit on their porches watching the end of the day—a much more civilizing performance than the double feature at the drive-in, which costs two dollars, anyhow. They call on one another wearing yesterday's clothes, torn slippers—the recognizable costumes for this time of day. "From the way the children scream," says Federico, "you'd think I'd run them down." So we drive back in time to turn on the car lights. I watch a Greta Garbo movie with wonderful dramatic situations, confrontations of greed and lust, and in the end this woman, whose beauty has been cataclysmic, is a streetwalker, her brain addled with Pernod. All this because of a broken heart. Indeed, she sees the man for love of whom she has been destroyed cheered by crowds. He offers to help her, but she seems not to recognize him, and when he has left she mistakes a bum in the café for Jesus Christ and gives him her last souvenir of love, a ruby ring. "This is the color of blood," the caption reads. "You died for love." There is no walkaway shot, no rain at all. We go out on the bum discovering that the ruby is genuine. Here is a grand passion—romantic and erotic love shaping a life—and am I wrong in thinking that such passions are no longer among us?

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The sun shines, and I feel much better. Yesterday, overcast until five, was a bummer. I am, between the hours of eight and six, the only man on these crowded streets who has short hair. At six or a little later, four or five other shorthairs appear. What do they represent? The young seem to be clerks, tellers. The others are middle-aged and have their hair cut as it has always been cut. On the street I glimpse a man in jeans who appears to be cruising. In the restaurant there is a man with a shaven head, dressed completely in finished black leather. At the table on my right is a family. The woman must have been pretty and is pretty no more, but she carries herself well and has her self-possession. He is perhaps fifty, and there is no trace of what he must have been as a young man. They order a moderately priced meal. They have either agreed or been taught not to ask for the filet mignon. Spaghetti and meatballs; the tuna-fish casserole. They say almost nothing to each other during the meal, but they seem not in the least uncomfortable. The daughter is pretty, but I can't see the fourth member, the son, until they leave the table, and when they do leave I see a cruelly crippled spastic whose smile is broad and maybe convulsive or maybe genuine. Make him twenty. Many of the other customers are women with children. Does Daddy teach a seven-o'clock class? On my walk back, I see that some of the classrooms are lighted. On the steps of the old state capitol a man plays a guitar. Beside him is an empty milk container. Two young men with their arms around each other frisk off to the east. Gay Liberation is electing its officers at the other end of town. Do they have a president, a secretary, and a treasurer? But on this late-summer night (hundreds of women walking out to the parking lot, leaving the movies, opening the bedroom windows, will say that it smells like autumn) the rightness of men and women seems invincible, seems affirmed by the neon light over the billiard hall, the music from an open door, the stars, the elms, the moon, the river. There seems on this night, at this hour, no possibility, no excuse for those spatial loves moved by mysterious seismographic shifts from the past. Tonight, no men lie in one another's arms.

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A. comes, and I like him very much. I find him uncommonly sympathetic, and wonder if this is some form of narcissism: Do I invent this sameness in our thinking? But this could be an invention of mirrors. At lunch we talk about débutante parties, which is a wrong turn to take, but later he tells me that after leaving me he had a nightmare about his father; that my claim to our equality is unacceptable to him. In a spasm of paranoia I think he is referring to his youth, his intelligence, his freshness of mind, but it seems that he would like to have me as an object of veneration. I believe him to be telling the truth; I cannot imagine him not being truthful. Or anything else unpleasant. We walk up the river in the sun. He is wearing sailor pants and is inclined to swing his hips, and I think people look at us as if we had been scoring, which is untrue. They are closing up the Ferris wheel and the carrousel for winter. Some camera students are photographing this autumnal commonplace. The chairs and tables are stacked on the terrace where refreshments are served. Trucks are taking the benches out of the pavilions. All that is left in the zoo is two bison and two burros. I see very little beyond the fact that I am easy in A.'s company and that the architecture on the west bank of the river is, without exception, ugly. We part the student and the teacher.

•

S.'s dinner party. Thrift shop and municipal dump. The tuna-fish casserole and, for one of the guests, organic vegetables. No hooch. A. is the most important. He flirts with me. The more he flirts, the more he seems like a woman. He shifts his shoulders, swings his hips, and gives me long, bone-making gazes, but we stay within four feet of each other. Who, in this situation, is the innocent?

•

A brilliant day after the storm. I lunch, joke with Federico, walk the dogs over the little hill. It is bitterly cold in the wind. The light is going. There have been two phone calls in my absence, one anonymous, and I assume it is A. There seems no way of tempering the absurdity of this train of thought.

•

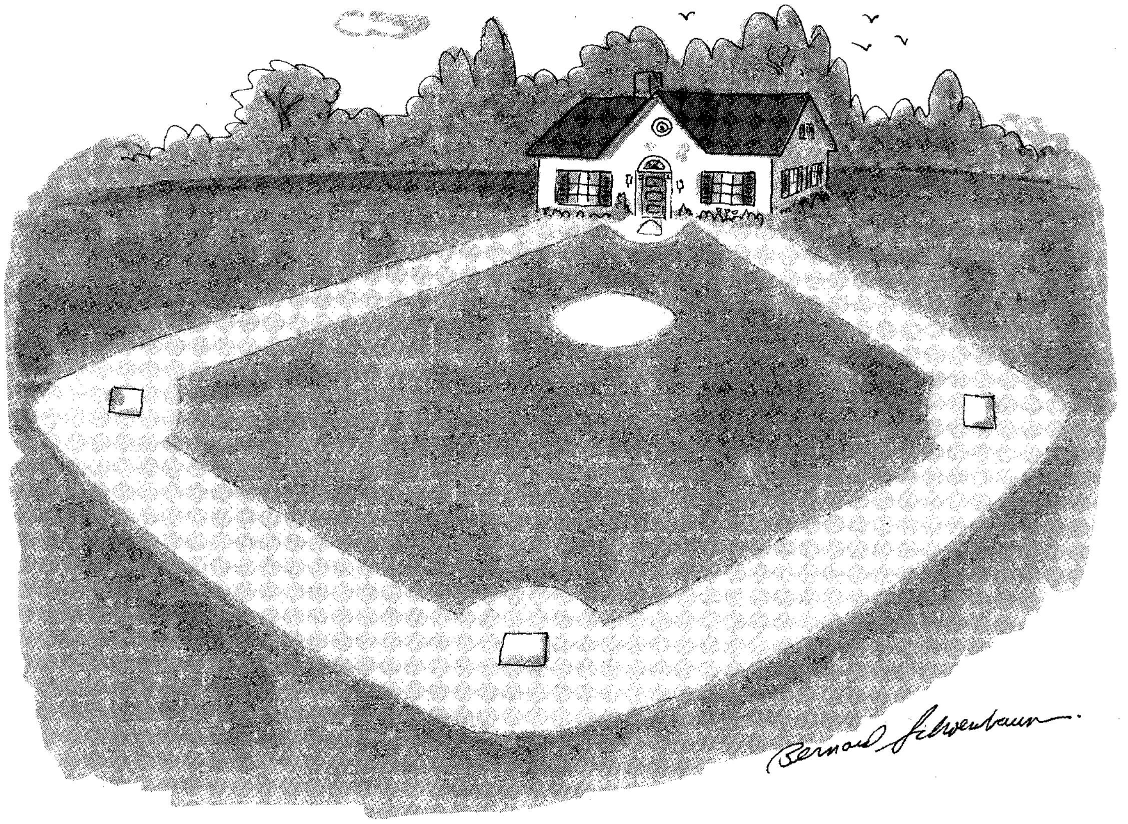
The last day of the old year, and I mostly want out; I don't know how to work it geographically or financially. My face is flushed with drink; I have lost either my patience or my understanding and have damaged my self-respect. We're back in the old and, I think, despicable routines. Federico and I watch a detective show with the old dog upstairs. Mary watches an English drama in the kitchen.

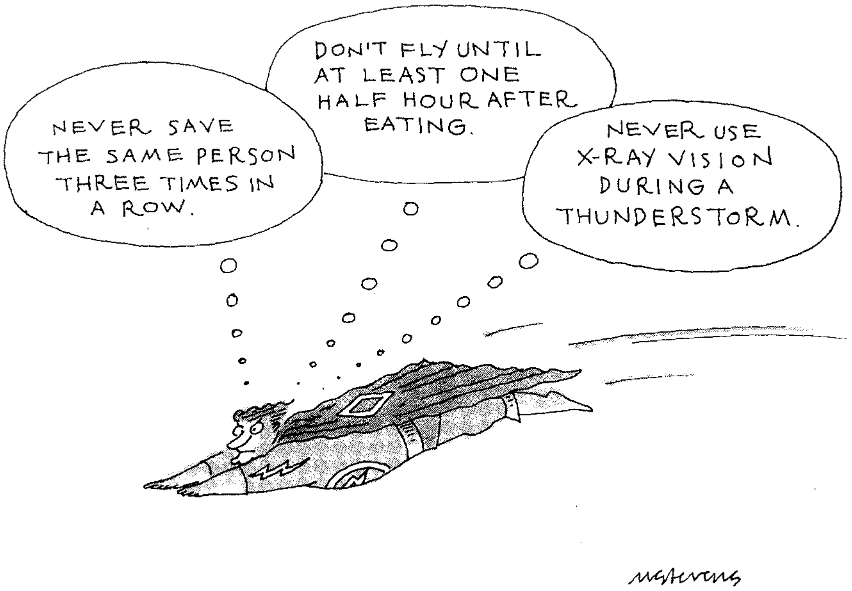
•

I don't seem to want to write anything but love letters. S. comes, and we walk over the hill, which lightens my aloneness, but at dark or a little later I feel a need for love that has the force of nausea. Jokes, talk, games are not enough. I want the sensation of love. Mercifully, we get out of the house and go to a movie, where I feel better. Up at seven to try to get gas. All the stations are unlighted and closed. There is no letter from A., and I wait for the mail.

•

My instability or iridescence rises to new heights. I want to write on a sheet of paper, "I love you, I love you, I love you." A hundred times, a thousand times. This is all aimed at the wrong customer. I will telephone. I refuse to




NEVER SAVE THE SAME PERSON THREE TIMES IN A ROW.
DON'T FLY UNTIL AT LEAST ONE HALF HOUR AFTER EATING.
NEVER USE X-RAY VISION DURING A THUNDERSTORM.
mstevens

SUPERSTITIONS

sublimate or repress a passion under the assumption that I am discovering a truth. "The scales fell from her eyes," they say at the end of an infatuation that was socially unacceptable. The idea, of course, is that society is invincible, ordained, the very word of God, and if you pervert your erotic drives you make a substantial contribution to the commonwealth. I will telephone, I will telephone, etc. Scotch calms me down.

•

Snow begins to fall early in the afternoon. Sometime after dusk it seems that the oil-burner is gone. My car won't start and is very soon buried. The night is cold, and even under a pile of blankets I feel the chill of the house. My heartbeat is then accelerated. I arrange to have the drive plowed so that the repair truck can reach here. I light a fire in the dining room and close the doors. The room becomes habitable but very smoky. The rooms upstairs are dark and cold. Mary speaks of the nostalgia of old rooms. I am reminded of the farm, but my memories are not pleasant. Those cold, dark rooms where my father lived. Tomorrow I leave for Iowa. My reveries are ribald and cozy. My facts, on this snowy day, are very bleak. I think A. will be in New Orleans, and I rather wish this so.

•

I drink a Martini before the morning star is set. Half asleep, I see Mary's face at its loveliest, and this is a pleasure. The images are like photographs in an album: closeup, long shot. I see her standing below me on the drive. I've loved her very much and I like this recollection. I wake for the first time in a month without a hard-on. I think that what I'm doing I have to do, and I hope I do it with the least injury to Mary and whoever else is involved. I cannot live without sentiment, humor, and carnal love.

•

The day is very warm and beautiful. Crocuses in bloom. Mary suggests that we take a walk together. She has not done this in a long time—I mean ten years. My dearly beloved son comes in the middle of dinner to ask for money. He has not come to the house in two years for any other reason. I can hear his wife say, "Go over and ask your father for some money." I've loved him; I've wanted him to marry and love and be loved as he has. I wanted him to have a son and to leave my domination; but now I feel that he is dominated by his wife. I wish he wouldn't always ask me for money. I wish I didn't know that he was ordered, commanded, to ask for money. One's children grow away from one.

The heating plant is working and my intestinal, sexual, and intellectual tracts are cleared. I must work. I call L. and get a hard-on, but I don't say so. I split some wood, very little, but I must do this more often. I find it very pleasant. I think of girls: S., eating a candy bar in the parking lot of a supermarket; P., unpacking her own bed linen. I write an advertisement for *The New York Review of Books:* "Revolting, elderly, alcoholic novelist desires meaningful relationship with 24-year-old aristocratic North Carolinian with supple form and baroque biceps. Little gay experience but ready learner. Etc." I can't remember A. at all, and I rather regret this.

•

Toward dark I decide to call A. No one answers the first time. He is there a half hour later. "Hello, John Cheever," he says. The voice seems less resolute than I remember. The edge, the vigor one listens for in a man's voice is not here. Complacency is its worst quality. "I missed you at Mardi Gras," he says. "You would have loved it. I danced in the streets for eight hours, and then I put on white tie and danced at the Comus Ball until dawn." I have never seen him dance, and imagine him to be a little ungainly. His back is too long. I feel estranged and think that to fall in love with such a man would be a guarantee of anguish and pain. He would come home late; he would not come home at all. He would put off my passionate advances with a tap on the wrist. How one would long for a woman, even a shrew.

•

And I think of L. in the morning, the lovely unfreshness of her skin. It was the light scent of a young woman who has made love and slept through one more night of her life. Her breasts are the fields and streams of my paradise. Her skin is warm and fine and young, and I mount her, but in our nearness I am keenly aware of the totality of our alienation. I really know nothing about her. We have told each other the stories of our lives—meals, summer vacations, lovers, trips, clothing—and yet if she stood at a crossroads I would have no idea of the way she would take. It is in loving her that I feel mostly our strangeness.

•

On Valium for two days running, and I do feel very peculiar, but it's better, God knows, than sauce. I do not want to return to a straitjacket with six padlocks. A.'s letters, full of descriptions of flowers, give me a pain in the ass, perhaps because they are not throbbing with declarations of love. He may be very tactfully and intelligently hinting at the fact that there is no possibility of a relationship between us—a relationship of any sort. I somehow think that we will not meet when he comes East. Sometimes this possibility breaks my heart. Sometimes it doesn't. I have a dozen letters to write, but I seem unable to write anything this morning.

•

A. sends on a record (Walton-Sitwell) and a note. "For what it's worth, for all my clumsiness and falterings, I love you." To admit that I love and desire him is extremely painful and difficult for me, but once I have made the admission I seem to find it relaxing. I love him very much, at least I do this morning. I love him very much and am happy to say so.

•

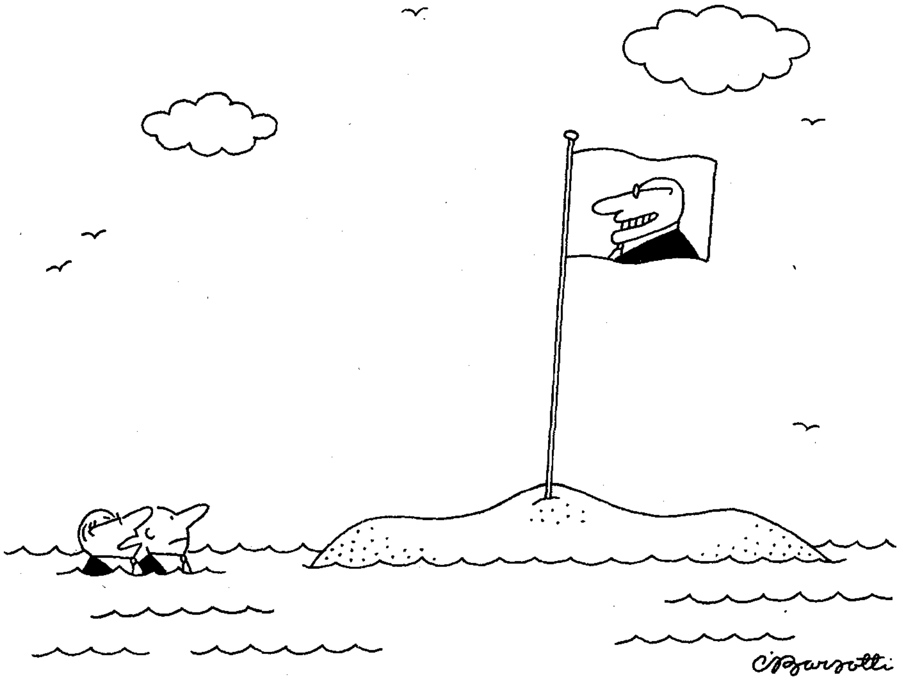
A bummer; not really bad, but not good. The director speaks three times: an exceptional man. At breakfast I am asked not to sit at a particular table. We do not play musical chairs around here, says an authoritative woman of perhaps forty, a little heavy. Her hair is neatly and recently dressed, she wears a small string of pearls, and shoes that look like a man's dancing pumps. She represents the club, that little band that exists by closing its membership. Since there was such a group in a line-riflery company, I shouldn't be surprised to find one in a place like this.

•

I try to find some opening for my work. I don't want the escutcheon and the night of the cats. I don't seem able to exploit my knowledge of aloneness and confinement. I can do the hustler, leaving out anything compromising, and ending with the morgue, but the only perception is the clairvoyance of the hustler; that is, his perfect lawlessness. There is no point in my leaving here until my work is in line.

•

The reform of alcoholics. This will be for a month, and I trust that I can make it. We lunch on meat and rice and Jell-O, and attend a lecture. A personable young lady lectures quite simply on attitudes, but she does mention alcohol as a source of phobias. I could follow this one. Three empty hours lie ahead of us. The magnificent mansions that have outlived their usefulness, their owners, and their incomes have become fortuitous. The bathroom is paved with mirrors, but who really cares? The room is vast, the reliefs of plaster *cherubini* with garlands of fruit and flowers.



"I'd rather drown."

•

During group analysis a young man talks about his bisexuality and is declared by everyone in the group but me to be a phony. I perhaps should have said that if it is phony to have anxieties about bisexuality I must declare myself a phony.

•

Fifth day. I think my drinking is of secondary importance. Then I watch a TV show, and the banality of this performance arouses my thirst more keenly than anything else so far. The director, toward whom I have some complicated vibrations, says that a healthy person can adjust to acceptable social norms. The banality of a TV show, certainly acceptable, is what makes me want to drink.

•

The woman in "The Visit" (not Mrs. Loomis) would ask of the others in the visiting room, "How can you get along with this sort of people?" Sixth day. My stomach is unsettled.

My stomach squared away at 3 A.M., and I feel much better. Mary calls to say that if I don't like it here she's found a marvellous place in Connecticut two and a half hours from New York. A new tenant joins us. He's not been detoxed, which is against the rules of the game. He has no bags, nothing but a pair of slippers for the bathroom. He looks like an archetypal loser, a goner, a dead one. It is crowding half past two, and I am uneasy. My insight into incarceration seems to have been bypassed. The balance here was all right—pleasant at times—but it seems broken by the arrival of the stray.

•

Quarter past five. I would drink if I were home. I stand at the window, watching the people on the street. I am confined. They are free to come and go, but they move so casually through this freedom that it seems wasted. Most of them carry something—a carton of cigarettes in a paper bag; enough groceries to make supper for one; a leash, at the end of which is a golden retriever sniffing the gutter. Make caca.

Good doggie. They are free, and yet there is no air of freedom on the streets. I'm confined. At least my situation is enunciated.

At around two I have a crisis about whether or not the curative force and the level of thinking in this place are correctly balanced. I am so uneasy that I nearly fall down the stairs. I come into focus after the lecture, bathe, and sleep soundly in spite of three seizures of the trots. Waking, I feel surrounded by some impenetrable wall of nervous indisposition. There is a way out, I know—a phrase, a memory, an anecdote, a word—but I am at the moment unable to find it. My palms are wet. My thinking is confused. A drink would help. I must wait until I find the way out.

•

The sounds of evening in New York. A baritone practices his scales and sings an aria—Italian, I guess, because of the sentiment and the G-sharp. Church bells. The only dog who lives on this block has a barking spell.

•

Waking on Sunday, I realized that I could go out onto the street at ten and be met by a young woman with an extraordinarily volatile and luminous face, and the enormous platform shoes that were worn last year, and when I have kissed her good morning and been kissed she will ask if her slip shows. Knowing that all of this will be mine in two hours, I wonder if I have the courage to leave confinement and seize my natural freedom. This for "Falconer." I put it down poorly. Standing at the window, with my palms sweating, I wonder if I will have the courage to step through this door when it is opened.

The psychologist finds alarming discrepancies in my profile, and when I state a few clear and simple facts she laughs openly and scornfully into my face. "You are mad," she says, a remark that has been made to me by several people, including a total stranger on the plane from Chicago. It is a pleasant and profitable madness. I sleep poorly, with long narrative dreams in black, white, and gray. I seem to have left all my manuscript in Boston, and then I realize that I can't remember the trip from Boston to Ossining or my admission to the hospital. This is a blackout. I must have been quite drunk and mad. I can't remember the hospital at all—not a nurse, not a dish. There was the view of the Hudson, rather flat there; the doctor's red hunting shirt; my wife and children coming in to visit. But I recall all of this with no legitimate clarity. The sweetness of freedom. Freddy the killer had accustomed himself to confinement and had not prepared himself for anything else. How sweet his cell seemed, his erratic toilet, his colored photographs of long-lost children who would not answer his letters or rendezvous with him in Klein's jewelry store or Macy's men's department. The night of the cats. J. tells me about working over Pepto-Bismol tablets with a nail file to make them the size of Antabuse. He stayed off whiskey for six months, but his wife was never home. It was he, sober and unrewarded, who did the shopping, cooked the dinner, took care of the children. "You have your own life in whiskey," she said. "Grant me mine." "But I haven't had a drink for six months," he said. He sipped a Martini three and a half days after taking an Antabuse and vomited all over the director's table. A nice fellow, with a sharp bark for a laugh; very pleasant to drink with all night long.

•

I wake at around two from the deepest, sweetest sleep I've known in a year. I think I can work, here or some such place, but I am doubtful about the house by the creek. Returning to that small room with yellow

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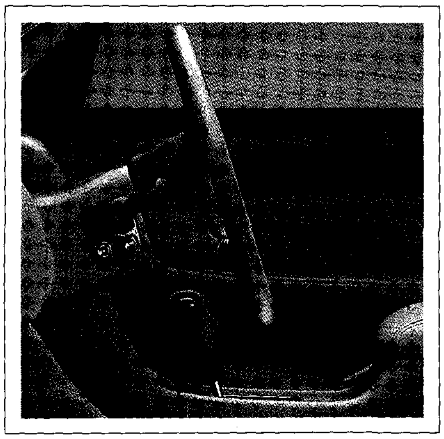

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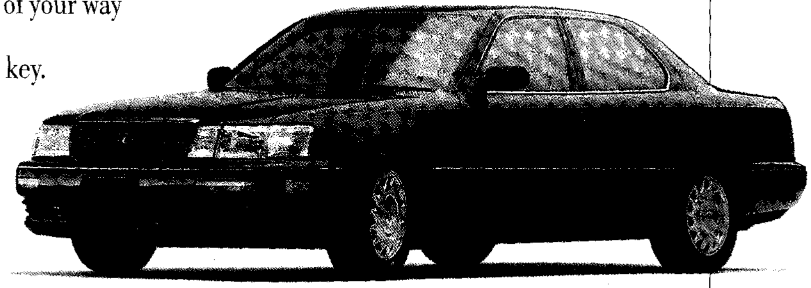

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walls might mean returning to all my bad habits. Don't I have the strength, can't I find the strength to overcome the weight and power of environment?

I call Mary at dusk. The bank has miscalculated, and we are being charged for a two-thousand-dollar overdraft. This is all my fault. The Boston statements have not been forwarded, the other statements are lost among my manuscripts, the dog has just jumped into a muddy pond, etc. She is very bad-tempered. This sort of thing provokes my drinking. It makes me afraid to return.

As the dark gathers, I see a gang gathering on the corner of Madison Avenue. They swagger in very good imitations of adults. Uncle Giovanni. Joe the King. At a signal they all start running. Later there is a searing light across the sky until I hear thunder. ("It frightens me," says J. at breakfast. It pleases me, I think.) But the room seems badly ventilated, and I cannot sleep. My thinking is alarmingly disjointed. I steal a knife from the kitchen to peel an apple. I see the gang again. These could be symptoms of withdrawal.

•

Across the yard, she puts out two plastic dog dishes for her cocker spaniel and her Scottie. She is wearing a housecoat and looks hung over. I have never seen her fully dressed, or looking as if she didn't need or have a drink. Then I think I hear some choral music. One hears almost no music from these back yards. Knowing absolutely nothing about music, I conclude, in a scholarly way, that it must be Puccini because of the ascending and melodramatic scale of flats. I once had perfect pitch, but that was long ago. Then I hear some dissonance and decide that it must be Berg or Schoenberg. The soprano then hits a very high note and sustains it for an impossible length of time, and I realize that what I've been hearing is the clash of traffic and a police siren amplified by a light rain.

I read Berryman on rehabilitation centers. When I wake this morning my feeling of dislocation is very strong. I am nervous; my vision is poor; I keep singing Dartmouth songs that I can't have heard for forty years. "I'm a son of a gun for beer / I like my whiskey clear and if I had a son sir I'll tell you what he'd do / he would yell To hell with Harvard like his daddy used to do."

•

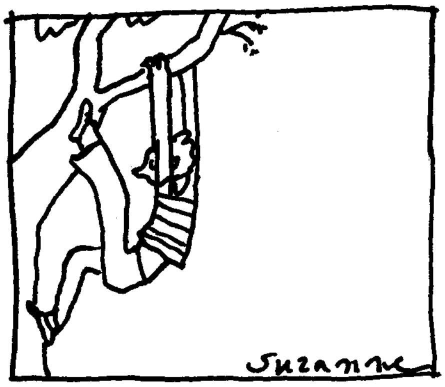
A heavy rain at five. I am a boy again, a child. I hear the rain strike the air-conditioners, watch it gleam on the slate shingles in Thursday's last light. I read, sleep, dream, wake myself with the loudness of my voice. I am riding, wearing loafers, and my loafers keep slipping through the stirrups. "Short stirrups," said L. "Did you ride much in Italy?" I never went near a horse in Italy. "She still loves you," said the woman with braids.

•

I've got those picking-up-the-pieces blues; I'm feeling blue all the time. I've got those picking-up-the-pieces blues, can't get the pieces on the line. I've got those picking-up-the-pieces blues, but the puzzle ain't mine.

•

I was sprung from the alcoholic-rehabilitation clinic yesterday. To go from continuous drunkenness to total sobriety is a violent wrench. This moment, this hour, is the sum of the not immutable past and the necessity of a future. I don't know where it began, and I might be able to retrace this year eighteen times without mastering it. It began, I suppose, with the pantomime on the other side of the river and continues this morning with a brief salutation, orange juice, and a little cold coffee. Now the house, containing two people, is still. Laughter seems to be my principal salvation. Laughter and work. I seem unable to resurrect the months in Boston. The role alcohol played is inestimable. I seem to have lost some manuscripts. I claim not to be troubled beyond worrying that they might fall into someone else's hands. I cannot face the shame of having lost my moorings through drunkenness. I seem this morning to have lost twenty pounds and perhaps twenty-five years. One thing is the old drag-ass I used to justify by age. Ask me to take off the storm windows, but ask me tomorrow. Eat. Drink seventeen cups of black coffee. Since I claim this to be a means of communication, I must prove it. What do I have? The escutcheon, booze—but after a century as black as unpolished basalt, onyx, or anthracite. The representation of liberty and justice. The night of the cats. The visit, still unclear. I think of O'Hara kicking the shit in his forties and continuing to work. He was about the only one.



I've changed violently, but nothing else seems to have changed. Looking for a goodnight kiss, I find the only exposed area to be an elbow. The dogs wake us before dawn, and when I ask if there is anything I can do, the reply is distempered. Recently, she has seldom enjoyed sleeping with me. I'm the king of the mountain, but nobody seems to know it. You can do the set piece about watching the visitors leave.

Day No. 2. I'm still very uptight but I think I won't take Valium. The set piece I'll aim at will be on liberty. There are three points of hazard. One is the euphoria of working at what I think is the best of my ability; one is the euphoria of alcohol, when I seem to walk among the stars; one is the euphoria of total sobriety, when I seem to command time. That bridge of language, metaphor, anecdote, and imagination that I build each morning to cross the incongruities in my life seems very frail indeed.

•

In Russia, in the 1860s or 70s, one would have written, "The tiny village of X, a hundred and twenty-seven versts from Moscow, was mentioned in the encyclopedia as the place where a landowner had successfully bred a dog with a cat." In France, a little earlier, one would have written, "*Le peu que nous savons de la petite ville de B——, nous savons parce que là se trouve un homme à deux têtes.*" In my own country, in the fifties and early sixties, one would have written, "The little mill town of Pearl River was one of those small industrial communities that welcome the driver with a sign saying 'OLD IN TRADITION, YOUTHFUL IN GROWTH' and that are covered by a single Zip Code." Today we are, thank God, spared these euphemisms and can say succinctly, "The little village of Pearl River was an asshole."

•

Seventh day out of stir. It will be a week at 11 A.M. No meeting last night, but I think I'll need one tonight. Work, sandwiches. My only brother arrives at half past two to scrutinize my sobriety. We both seem rather clumsy about the facts of age. It turns out that he's had a prostate operation, followed by a blood clot that nearly killed him. He pisses ten times a night. My digestive and urinary tracts are crippled by their encounter with institutional food, and my asshole is quite sore. Time sits with us at the table, an unwelcome stray. My brother goes into New York, looks at Grand Central, is frightened, and comes home. The phobic curse of my family, all of whom were afraid of heights, crowds, thunder, wealth, and fame. No, thank you. My daughter comes. She seems a little breezy. I read Carson's biography, and I shall report to A. Half awake, I have a glimpse of my iridescence, or my erotic stratifications. At the lowest, a shade below the subconscious, I embrace Z. This may be the comprehension of death by the love of death. At a stratum approaching consciousness, I embrace Y at that disarmament table where my social and my erotic natures put their signatures on an honorable truce. Fully awake, I embrace X. She stands on the highest step of the stair, stands in the sunlight, calling, "*Ben tornato, caro, carissimo.*" I will draft two letters before I get to work.

•

I miss Big Brother's telephone calls and wonder if he's sauced. He shows in time, and we go off to an A.A. meeting in an Episcopal church behind the Hartsdale canine cemetery and across the street from the hair-transplanting center. "Southern California," says my companion. The church, with its mortared-fieldstone walls, aimed at being Trinitarian and wound up looking like a Neapolitan grotto. "Everything but the Virgin Mary," says my companion. So, another meeting of no great moment passes.

•

Mr. Cheever says that his knowledge of confinement has been informed

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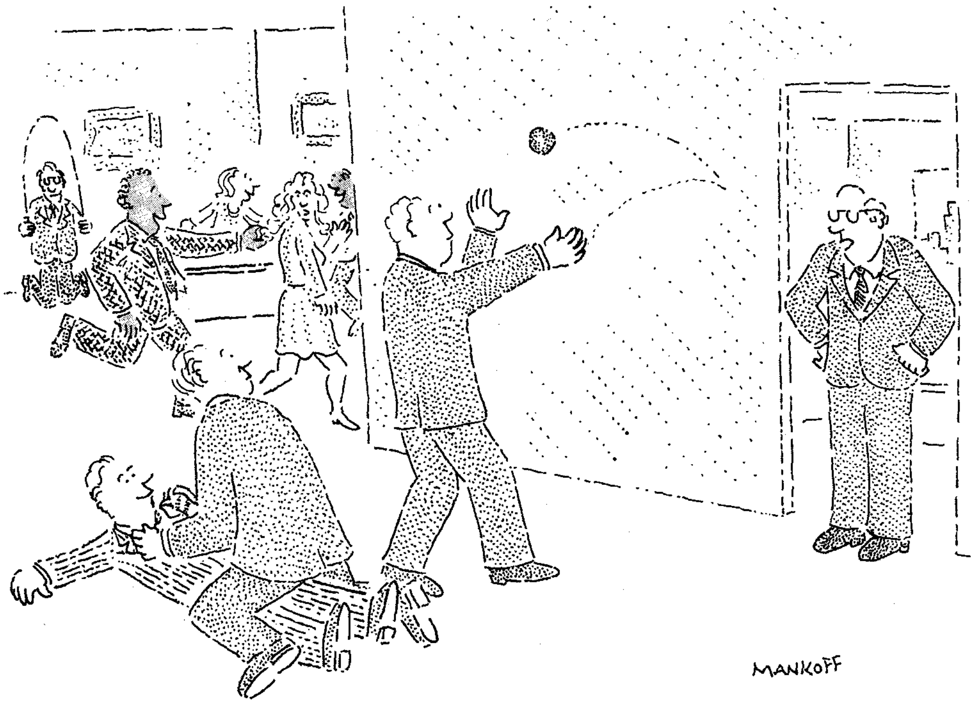

"All right, everybody, recess is over!"

• •

by the two years that he taught at Sing Sing; by being confined, as a writer, to a typewriter and a small room; and by having spent several months in various rehabilitation clinics for chronic alcoholics.

•

Twelfth day out, and I shall stop counting.

•

My sixty-third birthday. I feel as well as I've ever felt and thank God for this. Ben can't come; Susie will be late. Mary says, "Shit, I've got this big piece of meat," etc. It doesn't matter at all. I am very fortunate and should go to church. Yesterday I worked, spaded the peonies, won 20¢ at backgammon, spaded some more, stepped in dog shit, took off my stinking shoes, and, washing the dogs, punctured my right foot on a cultivator. Mary bandaged the wound, and I went off to A.A. I could do a scarifying description of an old man in an ill-fitting suit, celebrating his 38th year of sobriety. They put out the lights and bring a cake with lighted candles down the aisle. An unseasonably cold wind blows out the candles. We sing: "Happy anniversary to you," etc. One might point out that he could have done as well dying of cirrhosis, but that would be sinful. Returning here, I have acute pains across my middle and crawl naked and unwashed into my warm bed, where I fall asleep almost at once. Now I suffer from excessive loquaciousness, wool-gathering, "Muskrat Ramble."

•

Mary goes on one of her protracted shopping trips. One can only overlook that which is not to be understood. A letter from A., somewhat looser than his recent correspondence. I am spared a list of the perfumes that float in his window. He seems to be back on his tease routine, something I have seen clearly only for a moment. Read Saul. The wonderfully controlled chop of his sentences. I read him lightly, because I don't want to get his cadence mixed up with mine.

•

Work in the garden, which is much untamed, with Federico. Buy cauliflower and bean seeds, and, later, three moribund trees. My regression involves a lively concern with the property. I don't recall doing much. I read, make a stab at hedge clipping, eat a nice dinner, go to A.A. in Croton. The damp and cold church basement. A woman with the blazing makeup and straw-colored hair of the town whore who used to work in Woolworth's when I was a boy. A heavy woman with as much makeup. Our heavyset Irish leader, who twice, for mysterious reasons, speaks of unmanliness. "I mean, now you can feel tenderness for a man without no guilt," he says. I split before the confession, which seems to take place at covered tables. Watch asinine TV with my son, sleep, wake on Sunday with work to do, but I seem, involuntarily, to be obliged to observe the day of rest. The dogs dig holes in the lawn, and I swear at them. Mary swears at the vacuum cleaner. Toward the end of the afternoon, I recall what I have done, in the rectitude of this environment. I could not, yesterday, and in this environment, confess to any of this, and yet I claim to be unashamed.

•

J. calls. T. calls. A. is the last to call. I lunch with T. and meet A. at the train. He smiles as he runs up the stairs, smiles both with his mouth and, it seems, with his hips. As he crosses the waiting room there is less of this. I take his hand with deep ardor but release it to turn the steering wheel of the car. I am profoundly stirred, but there appears to be no intellectual equivalent. A. seems, and no one else does at this point, to magnify the incongruities between my social and my erotic drives to the point of combustion. It is all forgotten in a night's sleep, but I would like a better understanding of myself. Ben calls to say he has been offered a good job. My eyes fill with tears of happiness. I think of my father's sentimentality, aimed more often at the world around him than at me. He could weep over a fading rose. I think I will not write A. until he writes me. I must do "The Cardinal."

•

A letter from A., who refers to my beauty, my boyishness, and my lucidity. I snap at this bait so greedily that I cannot see my foolishness. I try to imagine the cynicism that would have been involved had I, at twenty-four, flattered my elders. We laugh at dinner, and while I am upstairs I hear the little dog singing. Susie arrives, quite high, and I am a little apprehensive about hubris, but I have no advice to give her. We go up to the pool, but I do not swim because my shoulder is still lame. So to bed; and at daybreak this Thursday seems like something placed in my open arms, placed on my lap; a bulk, a richness of light and darkness.

•

I read a short-story anthology from which I have been conspicuously excluded and see how right they were to leave me out. The tone of the stories chosen—most of them excellent—is much more substantial and correct than my flighty, eccentric, and sometimes bitter work, with its social disenchantments, somersaults, and sudden rains. I do see why some people describe my characters as weird; I see this before it gets around the corner.

•

At the A.A. meeting, I try to work myself into a conversation, but with no success. I sit alone, not uncomfortably. The first speaker is an alert, vigorous woman, whose legs have gone. The second is a very fat woman with a long history of arrests, jails, nut wards, suicide attempts. "I used to weigh two hundred and fifty pounds," she says. It looks to me as if she still weighed two hundred and fifty pounds. The next is an elderly runt, the kind of social steerage whose enlistment the Navy used to encourage. One also saw them in the infantry. Great at doing their own washing and ironing; reliable and punctual when sober; and, with or without a record, moving with the dancey, back-to-the-wall airs of a convict. His voice is close to inaudible. He repeats himself. He describes contracting to gold-leaf the dome of the Baptist church. He sold the gold leaf and gilded the dome with paint he bought at the five-and-ten-cent store. After fifteen years the dome, he says, is still shining; but we all know the Baptist church well, and we know it has no dome. The next is a large, young man, not fat but close to it. He wears a cotton pullover that shows his voluminous breasts and belly. His dark hair is long, and a thin lock hangs directly in front of his right eye. He removes this from time to time with a toss of his head. For me this is painful. My own right eye grows lame. Lying on a sidewalk outside a bar, he shouted that all he wanted was a little peace of mind, a minute—or maybe two—of being at peace with himself. All he wanted, after sixteen years of drugs and dope, was a minute of this, and he never got it. My eyes are wet. The aggressive woman speaks again. She gave away

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her washing machine (while drunk) and had to take her washing to the public laundry, where she drank from a pint in the toilet. Shopping at the supermarket, she suddenly abandoned her groceries, drove home, and drank a half-pint of bourbon in the coat closet, exclaiming wow, wow, wow. The confessions are too lengthy, I guess, but in spite of my recognition of these cruelties, and my wet eyes for the fat man, the confessions seem to me to go on for too long, and I entertain the thought of a drink. There is no subject and no predicate for what I feel. This I don't know, but I do know, moving blindly, that the answer is "Nix."

•

I wake at six. Last week I heard the bells of Trinity while I spaded the garden. This Sunday I will go. Kneeling, I am too deeply moved to shape a coherent prayer. I would like my daughter's happiness, some largeness of my comprehension, but my feeling is inchoate and close to tears. One wouldn't want to cry in the chancel, would one? The candles, the fires, are countless, and much of the force of this ritual is ancient and bold. I believe in God the Father. What a courageous declaration! The movements of the priest, the acolyte, and the communicants are like some vestige of a pavane. It is the tower bell that rings as we approach the mystery of the Eucharist. I am deeply moved. Leaving the church, I greet the priest, who has changed from his very heavy vestments—an inheritance from the haggard chorus boy who used to bless this flock—into the service white. "Good morning, John," he says. He is the same priest—unnamed and uncalled-for—who gave me Communion when I was last thought to be dying. I've not seen him since. There is no mention of God's will. We settle for an ardent handshake and loud laughter. We are both crying. The rain is so heavy that going from the church to the car and from the car to the house I get so wet that I have to hang my clothes to dry in the kitchen. I would like to call him, but I do not.

•

Uncommonly hot and humid. Reading Henry Adams on the Civil War, I find him distastefully enigmatic. I find him highly unsympathetic, in spite of the fact that we breathed the same air. Walker Evans once said that he was queer, and this struck me as an idle remark; but his descriptions of Milnes and Swinburne, and the posthumous gossip of the period that is, alas, unknown to me, bring the matter up once more. Absolute self-knowledge is, I believe, never a claim of a thoughtful man. The enormous, subjective prejudice that manipulates so broad a field as our memory is only a glimpse of the prejudices and whims that affect our judgments. So here is vastly connected Henry in London, quite androgynous and absolutely incapable of admitting any such condition. Here is the distortive force of society, and here is a most unnatural bloom. He praises a father he would happily murder and anticipates Freud's illuminating the Commandments with Oedipus Rex. Honor thy father, that thy days may be long.

•

So we have The Return from the Mountains. I've been content these three weeks, and one source of my contentment has been the conviction that I can see my limitations from a different altitude and in the light of a different time of day. "Hi," I shout. The response is faint. I lean for a kiss. There is none. If my questions are answered at all they are answered with a sigh. The groceries I bought are worthless, the corn is questionable, and would I mind if it were thrown away? "Not at all!" I exclaim, which means that it will be served. This is perversity and madness. She sweeps the floor, empties the wastebaskets, and spends the next two hours cleaning the refrigerator. Federico and I go for a swim. "She does not do this because she is mean," says Fred. I do not embrace him or shake his hand. I don't know what to say to him. I've lived with his brother through the same scene, and his brother now considers me contemptible. I can say to myself—to no one else—that his brother is full of shit; but I do realize how mysterious and beautiful his person is, and that judicious reproach, or even common sense, would be cruelty in this case. I have been told to avoid emotional crises and extremes of heat and cold. This triumvirate will kill me. My heart is racing, from an emotional crisis. The sun is hot. The water is cold. So the scene is set for my assassination, but I must go into the pool to wash off this emotional uncleanliness, and so I do.

•

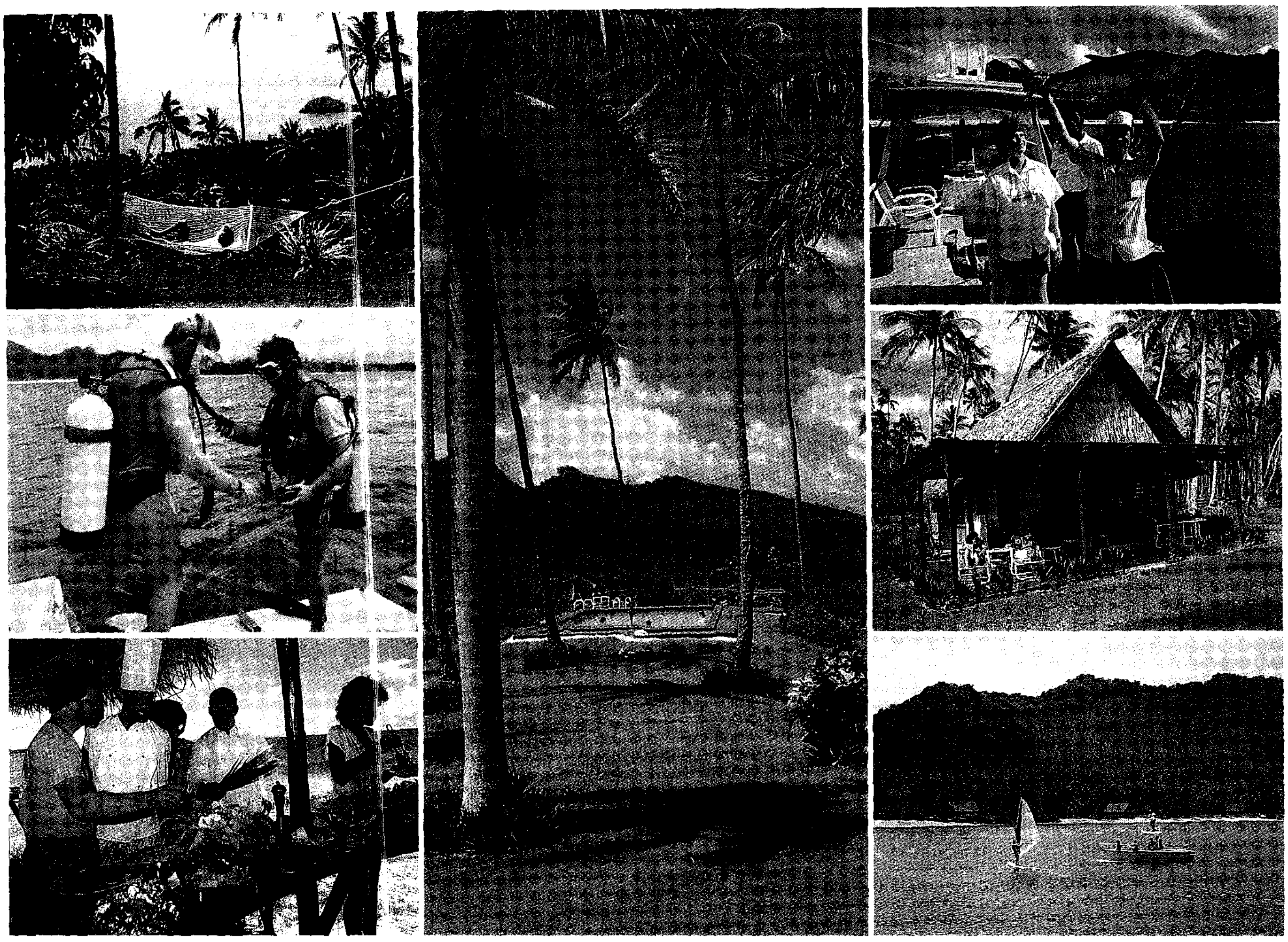
I am afraid to enter the house. I read on the porch. When I step in to get a drink, Mary asks in a sweet voice if I would like some crackers and cheese. So it is the old routine that her brother used to call Pavlovian, but this, perhaps, is taking it too far into the past. Clearing the table, I must struggle to keep from throwing the serving dishes onto the floor, but this was true—I remember this in detail, even to the figure on the carpet—when I was fourteen and alone with my parents. "Dear heart," she says to Fred at table. Out from under my feet goes another rug.

•

New journal. The right front tire needs air, and the car needs gas. This morning I am sad; quite naturally so, I think. That is, no unease is involved. I seldom wake in a vile humor, but I am often thrust into one. Seeing, in an unspeakably vulgar TV show, a man and wife touch each other lightly and tenderly, I am stricken. I always remember L. saying, "But I deserved better." There is, of course, no such law. I think I know enough about the possible relationships between men and women to name my marriage as obscene and grotesque. I think there is nothing wrong in taking inordinate pleasure in the company of someone who will smile at me over the eggs. I've been breakfasting alone for years while my wife in the kitchen screams obscenities at the refrigerator. But it seems not quite right to put onto the shoulders of someone else the burdens of this miscarriage. I don't think I have anything to worry about other than alcohol.

•

The sad day is followed by an emphatic morning, and all my anxieties about drink and unrequited love and other masks of death are gone, as if my prayers had been answered. So I wander around the dining room restating the fact that any image of the Divinity will involve me in a taxi accident and a delay on my way to the airport where



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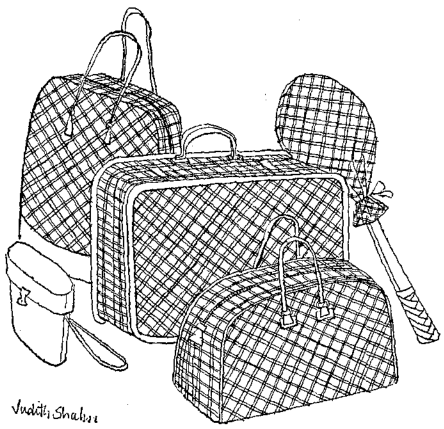
I would have boarded a plane that will crash, killing everyone aboard; that it is His hand that maketh me to stumble and thus avoid the adder; that it is He who led me safely by the hornets' nest before they could swarm and sting me to death. One is dealing with a mystery, and it is the depth of this mystery that accounts for the crudeness of those images that overlook our prayers: those old beavers with golden hats, those sappy angels, those grave and stupid apostles and prophets.

•

Up the river to Yaddo for the first time in many years without the company of alcohol. I remember promising myself that I would not take my flask into the toilet until Hudson. I remember, on the wall of some seminary, a large representation of Christ nailed to the cross. I remember (I was coming south early in the spring) a baggage cart on some platform, heaped with bundles of green palm leaves for the coming Sunday. Those were pleasant times, and so are these. When I was a boy I thought as a boy. The duckblinds, I see, are gone. A ruined house and a ruined castle are appealing, not at all like derelicts but, as the light pours through the gutter windows, like some graceful spinoff of our passion for building. The river is rough, but I can't find evidence of a wind strong enough for this, and I guess it could be a tide rip. I think of bridges I may be too frightened to cross, of my fear of throughways, but all of this is remote. My only unease is over the intensely intellectual nature of my pleasure. Alcohol at least gave me the illusion of being grounded. I count now on cutting and splitting wood, swimming in cool water, orgasms, and perhaps gluttony. I may simply mean a good appetite. In Albany, I lack identity because I have no credit card, but I don't hurl myself into this sort of crisis. At the bus stop I drink iced tea and admire the restoration of a building across the street. On the bus I sit beside a sleepy drunk, but my nose must have lost its keenness because I can't smell alcohol. He has been fucking all day, he says, and is going to rent a building and fill it with pinball machines to fleece the young.

•

Halfway through the meeting I have a deep seizure of melancholy. Looking out of the window, I admire a maple that has begun to turn, and think how like a rose it is—some enormous rose tree. I long to be out of the yellow plush chair and the other constraints of the afternoon. I also long, or I might, for A., although I would not cross the street to see him. And then I see that it is not he whom I love but someone in my remote past, in my emotional substructure, whom I loved. My brother, I suppose. I would have destroyed most of my lasting relationships for his sake. I sometimes find his company distasteful, but I remember, in Iowa—sometimes in bed with a lover—enduring the deepest longing for him; perhaps the deepest longing for something unlikely or something of the past. After the meeting I pass a football with J. and P. I go to the cocktail party wearing a sweater. These are all stabs at the past, but why should I worry, since I think them successful? "You are pale," says J., and I am suddenly tired. My toothache and my cold become serious. I am sick. I have wanted the other side of the medal, and now I have it. I have it through most of Sunday, when I have a fever and am slightly delirious. I remember what I want, no more. Pieces I used to play on the piano, friendships of all sorts. I stagger a little when I walk, and this is the darkness that I sought. At its worst it is regressive. My father will come home, not—as I've written—with a new fishing lure, but with a new marionette theatre. That's what I really wanted. And I think of my family—mostly my brother and sometimes my mother. We are in a group photograph—me usually on the far right or in the background, usually holding a glass. We seem printed in some color other than the rest of the group, but we do not have the intelligence to understand this, and thus we will always be a little ungainly, a little foolish, and at times intensely unhappy. So, past my fever, I wake again with nothing to say, really, but a thanksgiving.



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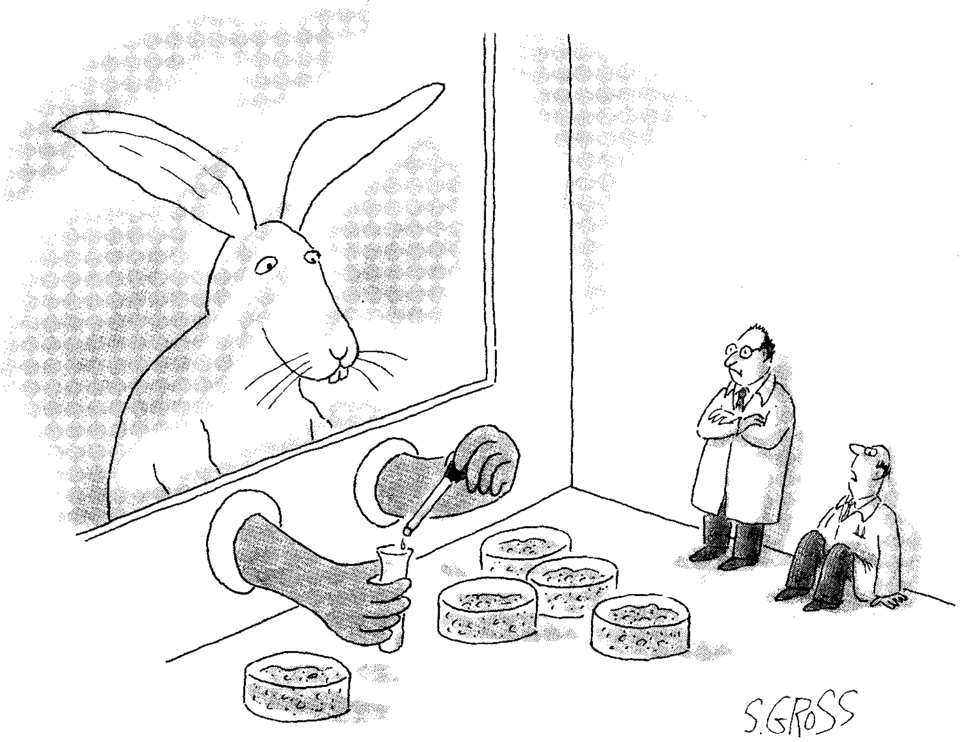
There is a letter from A. I have been convinced that I love him; I must have written him a hundred love letters; I have anticipated his company, enjoyed his conversation intensely, and have experienced much excitement about his career. He is not my lover, and the fact that I have been rebuffed may have much, much more to do with my feelings than I can comprehend. In short, he does not seem to appreciate my enormous charm, my power, my et cetera. At times, indeed, he seems quite indifferent to my gifts and my management of them. What a dilemma! And I, perhaps, through loving him, have given him character and intelligence, which he does not in any way want to possess. I do not know what his sexual partners are like, but I guess they are quite beautiful and muscular. I cannot imagine any consummation.

•

So, we go up the rocky road to where I summered so happily for so many years. I know the place very well; I know every hummock on the lawn; I sidestep down the steep, wet hill to the house where I was a lover, a husband, a father, a mountain climber, a heavy drinker, and seem to have suffered no losses at all. I am terribly cold. We go down to the house, which is one of the shabbiest places in which I have ever spent any time. The washbasin and bath are built for midgets. The rugs and the furniture have missed their date at the municipal dump. The shade on the one lamp is smashed and burned and still wound with cellophane. The cobwebs are thick, and when the rain begins the roof leaks. It leaks into a tin full of seashells that Josie Herbst gave to my daughter years ago. She painted a pretty pheasant on the lid and on the side asked, *"Kennst du das Land, wo die Zitronen blühn?"* The past redeems much of this shabbiness—my beloved dog Cassiopeia chewed the holes in the rug—and I am not particularly interested in shabbiness, but the house seems comical, considering the love it inspires. The front room is small, dark, useless, and wet from the leaking roof. A wretched light burns in the small bedroom. The unpainted wallboards (shingle nails are driven through) have the gleam of silk, the depth of water; the electric diagram is black with white porcelain insulators where the cords touch wood; the sound of rain on the roof is amplified; and there will be the morning.

I light a fire in the kitchen stove and in the dining room—all things that give me pleasure. S. cooks me a pleasant breakfast. Outside it rains and rains. B. gives us a few orders, and I split kindling while Federico cuts small wood with a hacksaw. We joke about having received our orders. Look, look. I am cutting kindling. My son is cutting wood with a hacksaw. Look, look. We are good boys. We are not bad boys. We may get an extra serving of eggs goldenrod at lunch. This is all quite true, quite ridiculous, and for me, laughing with my son, quite wonderful. I am happy to see a tubful of kindling. I stop at the car and get a box of crackers. Mary calls from the porch, "If you wish some cheese with your crackers there is some."



"Some genetic engineers we turned out to be!"

•

On the day we leave, I wake before dawn. The morning star is so bright that, seeing it through the trees, I mistake it for the moon. All the stars are shining. I light the stove, eat a big breakfast, and presently we start. The clouds have lifted, Cardigan Mountain can be seen, and the hills are a phenomenon of light. So we go down the once narrow roads in the first of the light. There is smoke from the chimneys—wood smoke, which is much less direct than the jets of smoke or vapor you get from other heating plants. Wood smoke spreads on the wind, flattens in the rain, and is, of course, fragrant. Here are signs and ruins of the contrition of the past: a beautiful barn, a beautiful church that is now an insurance office. There are more signs of vagrancy than anything else; but you said this before. The spread of the country reminds one of some Biblical promise, although it holds no true promise. But it is beautiful and heartening. "See the Dinosaur Footprints," says a sign. "Open weekdays from nine to five. Children half-price." And above the sign one sees the Laurentians, clearly scored by the glacier into forms that are a little like waves. There are high, green pastures, bright-blue duckponds, fire-colored hills, colonies of trailers, and the Housatonic and the Connecticut Rivers. "I have to piss," I say, as we enter Hartford. "That's too bad," says Mary. "I will piss in the thermos," say I, lightly. "You will not piss in my thermos," says Mary. "I am about to piss in your thermos," say I, unfastening my trousers and taking out my cock. "Don't you dare piss in my thermos," says Mary. We are in the thick of the Hartford traffic. I empty cold tea out of a jar and piss in the jar. I am very relaxed and happy. I have to piss once more. Back here, I walk the dogs, light a fire, eat heavily, and have briefly the illusion that I've gained height. I watch some TV that I think rather clever and go very early and happily to bed.

•

So, I've come through that much of the darkness. I think—not pretentiously, I hope—of the old quotation from Plato, "Let us consider that the soul of man is immortal, able to endure every sort of good and every sort of evil." What else would one say? I come into town too fast for a mooring at A.A. and do not stay for the double feature. It helps, and I am perhaps most uneasy about getting back on the sauce.

So, the book falls into place, rather like "The Country Husband," and what did that amount to? Some compliments and a three-hundred-dollar prize; not enough to feed the dogs. There are the usual stones in my way. I must move all the manuscripts this afternoon. Neither the vacuum cleaner nor the dishwasher will function, but the splendid thing about working happily is that it leaves me with very little energy for bitterness, anger, impatience, and long indictments. When you are working well everyone will want to clean the floor under the chair where you sit, and long-winded gossips will call on the telephone every ten minutes.

So it goes through the leaves. Then, mercifully, we skip the scene on the water tower. A simple, declarative statement. So through the school, the parting. It is then that we have the examination of his love. Then the cuckold, the dungeon; the night before the cardinal was expected Jody returns. I think I can type it out and be done with it tomorrow.

Even if I don't finish until the end of next week, it doesn't really matter.

•

I think I cannot accept the simplified moral that breaking sexual taboos leaves you open to every other sort of accusation. I am cold. Mary is cleaning the rugs. Oaths rise up the stairwell. I should go to Dom's for the snow tires and the radiator checkup. I must borrow a bicycle pump and steal a valve cap. I could spade the tomatoes and transplant the peonies. Reading old journals, I find a few set pieces and some proof of my own virtue. One would like to act impetuously, but one has been photographed, one has been discussed, and the dross of the looking glass is part of my craft. I cannot completely escape: Oh, look, look at the horny, tireless, clean man! I can only pray for the right mixture. I think of the cardinal, but with no great urgency. How marvellous it would be to finish this in the spring, by which I mean before the bank account runs out. By which I mean God's willingness. This, it seems, will not be my last book, and so some portentousness has slipped out of the room.

•

So, the holiday, the snow, the cold, the brightness. I have a mild stomach unease. I think of the holly tree in Hanover—probably the largest holly in the Northeast and very probably planted by some English settler. I think I can remember its darkness, and I do remember that some florist attacked it with a hacksaw and stripped the lower branches. Did I go around to the neighboring florists to see if I could find signs of our tree? I doubt it. I do remember training horse brier around the tree so it could not easily be found. I do remember imagining a letter from my mother, received by me in the Army, urging me to come home at once and protect the holly tree. This was a crib from "The Late George Apley." It is less adventurous than I would like. There is the height and the darkness of the tree. And I remember a letter from my father: "Do not underestimate the importance of anniversaries—Christmas, birthdays, and so forth. They are of the greatest importance to you and the people you live with." And for Farragut in prison there is the broad and bitter irony of celebrating the equinox; the mysteriousness of the world we live in; the magnanimity of God, who gave us his son, condemned to a cruel and a lingering death for our sins at the instant of his humble birth in a manger; and the healthy and preposterous concept of the family. There are the photographs that were taken in September. The blasphemy of the prison is no greater. The sense of all the world wrapping, unwrapping, decorating; the green tree strung with jewels and burned; the gasping sound of resinous needles exploding in the heat; a memory of the blackbirds in the autumn pulled through space.

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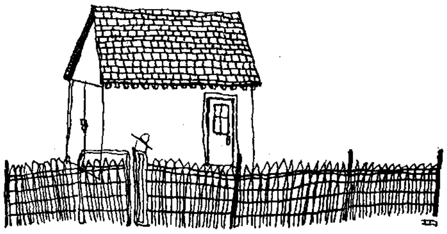
In reading old journals with Farragut's letters in mind, I come on the fact that, for nearly three years, I wrote A. love letters and received flirtatious letters from him. I think I will destroy these pages of the journal. I cannot arrive at any satisfactory recollection of this passionate love. The recollection of any infatuation is bound to seem mysterious, but I would like to go further than to exclaim about my self-deception. During this time I seldom saw A. He had in his favor the fact that he was outstandingly gifted, and, I thought, comely. He wrote continually about his homosexuality. What troubles me seems to be aesthetic. How did this long-waisted man come to take such a dominating position in my pastoral landscape? Here were the trees, the grass, the dry stone wall, and the stream that might contain trout. What is this curious figure doing here? I was lonely—a fact that I can state easily enough, although I am absolutely incapable of imagining a loneliness powerful enough to grant him a commanding place in this scene. They say that people born under my constellation are truly halved. Here, again, one comes to aesthetics. No one is half a man. I find this unacceptable. I was cruelly torn when I left my brother, cruelly torn when R. left me. I was torn, but not bisected. I had quite enough steam to go on. Why, then, should I have so needed A.? I need him no more; I rather dislike the thought of seeing him again; but one always says this about a love affair that is unrequited and has been forgotten. And then, thinking of opportunities, I remember that while feeling complete with L., I could at certain hours of the day—dusk, of course—feel, even with her in my arms, a profound longing for A., who would appear long-waisted and quite ridiculous in comparison. Is contempt at the bottom of this longing—must I, for a total erotic gratification, embrace someone who is naked and contemptible? If this is true I find it unacceptable. I find it truly unacceptable.



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So, the heaviest snowfall in many years. How pleasant to be sober. Mary seems troubled, but then I always counter by saying that I, too, am troubled. She does not speak to me all day, except to ask for the salt. But it doesn't really matter, or it matters that there is someone else in this house. And I wouldn't want a wife who was sitting in my lap all the time, who denied me the considerable privacy I need. So she watches TV in the kitchen. I watch TV in the attic. I think she is deeply troubled, but I am successful in not mentioning this to my daughter, and I think it will pass.

And about that little snow-buried town where I once spent a winter and the men used to get together in the bar and talk about their wives; one of them explained to me that when you're dealing with crazies you have to understand that they don't like it, either.

•

On the question of crypto-autobiography and the fact that the greatness of fiction is not this, I am writing not from my experience as a teacher in prison but from my experience as a man. I have seen confinement in prison, but I have experienced confinement as a corporal in a line-rifle company, as a stockade guard, as a traveller confined for thirty-six hours in the Leningrad airport during a blizzard, and for as long again in the Cairo airport during a strike. I have known emotional, sexual, and financial confinements, and I have actually been confined to a dryout tank on 93rd Street for clinical alcoholics.

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This, I think, will be my last long narrative, and that is exciting; but what have I got? The escutcheon—and I might be able to write an overture around this—and the interview with his wife, the cats, the love affair with Jody and Jody's ascent, the drug addiction, and the three letters. That's it. And what do I intend? A story about a man of forty-six who enters prison. He falls in love with Jody, who escapes; he is visited by his wife; he suffers the agony of drug withdrawal; and he escapes. You've got to have more narrative in your bag than that. So he must have some failed escapes. Other attempts and other relationships. With whom? E. J. Farragut entered the Falconer Jail on the 23rd of March. All right, I want something beautiful, and it will be done by June.

•

I must make a stab at the income tax, have my pants dry-cleaned, prune the grapes, etc., and ride my bicycle. There seems to be such a thing—for me, at least—as a pledge of sexual allegiance. There are juicier orifices, more musical laughter, vaster and darker fields of comprehension, but I was born in this country and shall serve under this flag.

•

I do prune the grapes and will today paint the iron and do the wisteria and the roses. I suffer an inconsequential interview and after dinner, lacking TV, read Updike on Borges and Nabokov. I am grateful to John for having presented the masters so splendidly. I have not liked Borges, but the quotations John gives leave me feeling that the blind old man has an extraordinarily beautiful tone, a tone so beautiful that it can, quite gracefully, encompass death. And there is Nabokov, who can be better than one thinks possible. This, then, is the thrill of writing, of playing on this team, the truly thrilling sense of this as an adventure; the hair, the grain of sand in one's mouth; the importance (but not at all a selfish one) of this exploration—the density of the rain forest, the shyness of the venomous serpents, the resounding conviction that one will, tomorrow, find the dugout and the paddle and the river that flows past the delta to the sea.

•

So, I think that we, the good writers, are at bottom ungainly. Rereading, I deeply doubt my judgments. At A.A., a strange parish house, I wonder if this book is not simply a testament of conversion. Conceal this. I do observe how loudly and with what feeling we say the Lord's Prayer in these unordained gatherings. The walls of churches have not for centuries heard prayers said with such feeling. Deep. So, I know how it ends. Ransome is in for twenty-five years for hijacking an airplane from Miami to Cuba. Kidnapping. The hijacking law hadn't been passed. And the stranger gives his coat to Farragut. "I want you to have it." So he puts on the stranger's coat and with it a peace that he cannot understand; and in character, prone to misunderstanding, he gets off at the next stop.

•

Ski briefly into a stand of pines. There is in them the sound of the wind, loud and faint, and I will skip the similar sound of traffic from the throughway. That's for another writer on another day. I see the strength and beauty of the copse and think that it reminds me only of a photograph of an old woman who has written, "Standing among my great trees, I think of all my loves."

She was the queen of Romania. I know what she meant, but I have no similar feelings. I do observe that the light in the copse forms four distinct strata. There is first the whiteness of the snow, tracked by my skis. Then there is the color of the pine boles, or trunks: the color of cinnamon, an inward color that seems to need very little light to be drawn out. Above this is the darkness of deadwood, as dense and impalpable as smoke, and above this the stratum of fresh green that depends upon sharing the light of the sky.

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I think the work is successful and that I may be rich and famous. I claim not to care. I can always scythe my fields and walk in the streets. It is the strangeness of this excitement that I must examine. Why should it seem so strange to succeed? I do not mean pride or hubris; I mean only to have solved most of my problems and to have exploited, to the best of my intelligence, my raw materials. Take your rightful place, I say, standing at the bathroom window, free of the fact that I have always been content with second best. I am not better than the next man, but I am better than I was.

—John Cheever

(This is the first of two parts.)

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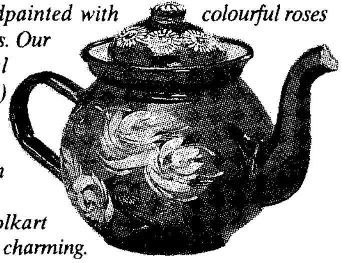

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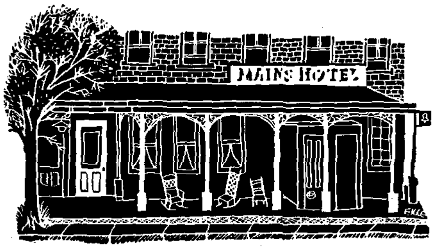
LETTER FROM THE NETHERLANDS

I WAS standing at the back of a crowded tram in Amsterdam a few weeks ago, on my way to the Central Station, when, at a stop near the Concertgebouw, a young man got on with a bulky television set. He had to push the television up awkwardly ahead of him to get it onto the tram. Once on board, he steadied himself with one hand as the articulated cars whipped around a corner and sped into the canal-girdled city center. With his other hand he dusted the top of the television with a handkerchief. I reflected comfortably on the way domestic pride had been handed on to a new Dutch generation. Then the tram stopped at the Herengracht. The rear doors opened, and the young man got off, stepping smartly past the TV. He walked away and didn't look back. The tram moved forward again, and the big set slid against my foot. I glanced around, perplexed, and caught the eye of several passengers. One man gave me a wry smile and a shrug, as if to say, "What can you expect nowadays?" An older woman had gone red—I felt the contagion of embarrassment. As the tram emptied at the station, the last stop, the television set remained behind, grossly abandoned.

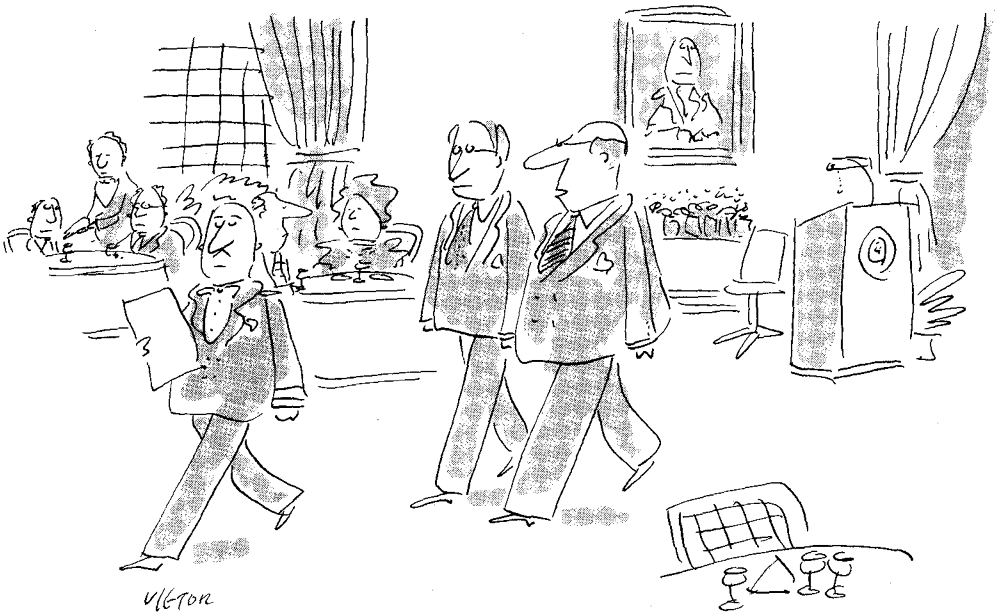
The Dutch have long been typed as obsessive cleaners of houses and rearrangers of landscape. Various reasons for these traits have been suggested, among them the threat of the sea, which imposes the necessity of dredging, ditching, and reclaiming, and thus gives much of this damp country a man-made character. In the last few years, the Dutch, faced with increasing environmental problems, have appeared to be in the vanguard of an effort to put things to rights. Queen Beatrix, in her 1988 Christmas broadcast, talked about the earth's demise and called for a new relationship with nature. Political parties vied to be the most environmentally progressive. Ministers resigned and Cabinets were reshuffled over environmental issues. Think tanks were set up and policy documents circulated. More copies of the Club of Rome's 1972 report "Limits to Growth" were bought in the Netherlands than anywhere else except the United States, and quite recently a national environmental survey, "Concern for Tomorrow," and a guide to environmentally sound housekeeping have topped the Dutch best-seller list. So much attention has been given these matters—not least by a National Environmental Policy Plan, a two-hundred-and-fifty-eight-page document released in 1989 and updated last year—that some people here have seemed to think that the problems were well in hand. Another recent report may have surprised these optimists. It came from the Organization for Economic Coöperation and Development, which is made up of twenty-four affluent nations. Thirteen nations had provided enough data for observers to rank them in terms of the damage they were doing to the environment. From the data, Sweden seems to be the most environmentally friendly, and the Netherlands the least so: the proud housewife publicly exposed as the slattern of the developed world.

With fifteen million people jammed together in a country about the size of Massachusetts and Connecticut, the Netherlands is one of the world's most densely populated nations. In the west of the country, many towns and cities are joined in a horseshoe of settlement the Dutch call the Randstad, or Ring City, where the population is some four times as dense as it is in the rest of the country. Hardly anywhere in the Netherlands are you out of sight of houses. Go into one of the skimpy Dutch woods and there is always somebody among the trees. In Utrecht, at the hub of the splendid railway system, the station teems all day as thousands of pedestrians move this way and that to avoid collisions. The density of human beings is matched by the density of cars: there are more cars per square mile in the Netherlands than in any other country. In addition, the Netherlands has the world's most intensive agriculture. The country lies at the mouth of the Rhine, which is the primary source of most of its drinking water and is one of the most chemically contaminated rivers on earth. Each problem area—water, land, air, people—is linked to the others in chains of cause and effect. In the words of Fred Langeweg, a scientist at R.I.V.M., the National Institute of Public Health and Environmental Protection, "there is no space between us and the predicament."



TWENTY-TWO years ago, I spent some time looking into the ways in which the Dutch were organizing their little room and possibly forestalling the implosion of an overcrowded world. Now it seems that their long experience of physical planning has not enabled them to fend off a plethora of what could be terminal problems having to do with their environment. *Milieu* is the word of the moment. Borrowed from the French, as a number of other terms were during the Napoleonic occupation, it has slowly expanded from meaning man's social surroundings to encompass just about all aspects of man's total environment—home, work, other people, the elements, and what man makes of them. *Milieu* figures in the names or endeavors of some fifty Dutch organizations. Many have grown rapidly in recent years. The largest, Greenpeace Netherlands, has a membership of eight hundred thousand—about one out of every eighteen adults. The Dutch branch of the Worldwide Fund for Nature, with about three hundred and fifty thousand members, is one of the biggest in Europe. Milieu Defensie, the Dutch Friends of the Earth, has roughly thirty thousand supporters and gets about four hundred telephone calls a week from consumers wanting to know the effects of using, say, detergents, tropical hardwoods, or plastic cups. Another *milieu* telephone service, run by R.I.V.M., answers questions from professionals about how to get hold of specialized environmental information, sometimes scientific and sometimes opportunistic, such as where to get a subsidy for doing the green thing.

Although some *milieu* groups appear to have the salvation of the planet as their prime aim, others concentrate on specific areas of Dutch land or water—Frisian heath, for example, or Zeeland marsh. Some have a well-dressed approach to protecting old houses in the country and others a slightly hippie-ish attitude toward saving and living in old houses in the cities. In 1971, the University of Amsterdam established a department called Milieukunde, which it believes is the first attempt to inte-



"*You are where you eat.*"

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grate various disciplines in an interfaculty program; the program can be attended by undergraduates for six months of their four years, and by postgraduates for a year, and it has been emulated by other Dutch universities. Ever-increasing numbers of civil servants work for government ministries with environmental sections—most notably the Ministry of Housing, Physical Planning, and Environment (generally referred to by the acronym VROM)—and for institutes like R.I.V.M. (Coincidentally, both VROM and R.I.V.M. have chickens wandering in the yards around their huge offices.) Meanwhile, the sound of bottles smashing as they are dropped into recycling bins echoes in the streets of cities and villages; batteries thud into separate collection boxes attached to lampposts. Adults and children watching television just before the 7 P.M. news are bludgeoned with *milieu* messages in word, sound, and picture: in one, a light bulb slowly dims; in another, a voice announces, "We are part of the problem." A man I know who works for K.L.M., the Dutch national airline, remarked to me, somewhat heretically, that he thought there might be too much environmental exhortation, from the government and other sources. He feared it might eventually weary the still receptive populace.

ONE simple image of the concern that the Dutch have for their surroundings is a small bronze statue in the village of Spaarndam, about three miles northeast of Haarlem. Not many Dutch people know that it is there. Those who do, if they are asked about the reason for it, make offhand remarks like "Oh, that was only a story," or "I think it's there just to attract tourists." The statue is set on a dike overlooking an old pair of sluice gates and depicts a youth crouching on one knee, his right hand placed in a hollow of the bronze. The boy who put his finger in the dike! Apparently based on an old Haarlem legend about a lad who heroically spent an entire night blocking a hole that, if it had become enlarged, would have caused an inundation, the tale was given wide currency in the United States and Britain by Mary Mapes Dodge in her 1865 book "Hans Brinker; or, The Silver Skates." The statue was put up by the Haarlem branch of the Dutch tourist organization, the A.N.V.V., in 1950, with a seven-year-old Princess Margriet attending. An inscription on the plinth in Dutch and English mentions the Netherlands' perpetual struggle against the sea.

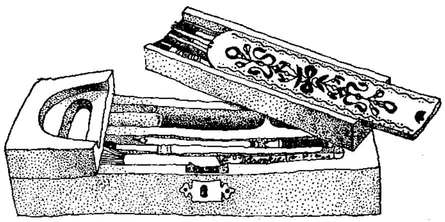
"Hans Brinker" has never been very well known in the Netherlands. The story of the brave Haarlem boy has generally reached Netherlanders by way of foreigners, who are often amazed that the Dutch aren't as familiar with it as the British are with the story of King Alfred and the cakes or Americans with the story of George Washington and the cherry tree. What is perhaps even more curious is that the Dutch now seem to have lost interest in that "perpetual" struggle—or, at least, to have dropped it well down on their list of environmental priorities. This is so even though nearly every Dutch household has an atlas showing how much of the country would go under if the dikes and other sea defenses failed (roughly forty per cent). A westward glance from the rail line between Haarlem and The Hague takes the eye to a wall of coastal dunes, the raised edge of the saucer which is Holland. "Nowadays nobody feels unsafe," a woman told me, "though, clearly, if the North Sea rises because of global warming we may be in trouble." This lack of immediate concern may be partly generational: those who lived in Zeeland, in the Delta area of the Rhine, Meuse, and Scheldt Rivers, during the great northeaster of 1953, when the sea broke in and nearly two thousand people were drowned, have their memories. A young woman who works for Greenpeace Netherlands told me that her grandmother was still scared of water: "She's nervous when she takes a bath." But the main reason for the Dutch confidence is the Rijkswaterstaat—the authority that looks after coastal defenses. This authority, part of the Ministry of Transport and Public Works, is often thought of as a state within the state; more than two per cent of the national budget goes to fund it.

The Rijkswaterstaat oversees a costly and more or less continuous process of coastal replenishment, with sand being dredged and pumped from offshore to the beaches and dunes. About half of the country's two hundred miles or so of coast is showing signs of receding; in some places, like the resort of Egmond aan Zee, the local policy of allowing building on the dunes has proved disastrous, and several seaside houses—once *aan zee*—have gone into it. The Rijkswaterstaat has been working to what it calls a Delta standard—making almost the entire Dutch coast as storm resistant as the great Delta works of dams, barrages, locks, and sluices have made Zeeland. In the recent past, possibly in part because of the greenhouse effect, sea level has risen. The Rijkswaterstaat is looking into the idea of closing an arm of the Delta that—

after strenuous public debate in the late sixties—was left open for maritime trade and marine life. Inland dikes may have to be reinforced and water levels allowed to rise, with unwelcome effects on river discharges, farming, and drinking-water supplies. Three alternative solutions for the coast have been considered: retreat; preservation of roughly the existing line; or attack—going forward to reclaim certain areas off the present coast. After much research and discussion, the Rijkswaterstaat—a greener organization than it used to be—has opted for preservation, though of a dynamic kind, "dynamic" meaning that some dunes and coastal islands will be allowed to move naturally. This policy will cost more than retreat but less than expansion—probably at least sixty million guilders (thirty-one million dollars) a year—but the Rijkswaterstaat has based its cost estimates on a rise in sea level of about eight inches in the next century, and costs will go up if sea level rises more rapidly. Some experts say that a rise of twenty-three inches should be expected.

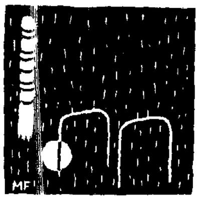
Dutch worries about global warming were briefly alleviated this February, when bitter easterly winds blew for a week or so, snow fell, the canals froze, and much of the country resembled a winter landscape by van Goyen or Avercamp. In the papers, the Gulf War lost its top-of-the-front-page position to skating events: in particular, to stories arousing hope that the Elfstedentocht—the Frisian skating marathon through eleven towns along canals and lakes, in which some sixteen thousand skaters traditionally participate—might actually take place again this year. It has been a rare event during the last twenty years of mostly mild winters. As an anticipatory Elfstedentocht fever gripped the country, just about everyone who could go skating did. Schools closed to let their students take to the ice. Offices were undermanned. I spent a weekend with friends in IJlst, which is on the route of the marathon, and is where Frisian wooden-bodied skates are still made, in a one-man workshop; thanks to the cold snap, it had sold out its entire stock. My friends' phone rang frequently with calls from Randstad relatives, wanting to know how thick the ice was and angling for an invitation to visit if the marathon took place. Most of the inhabitants of IJlst were out skating in the shadow of the town's one windmill (a working sawmill), occasionally stopping to get some soup or hot chocolate from a little stall set up on the ice, and those who weren't were watching skating races on TV. The Dutch achieve a rare relaxation when they're skating. These modern Hans Brinkers, young and old, in bright stretch clothing, swish along, leaning forward, arms swinging energetically sidewise or locked streamlined behind their backs. I asked one man, an educational psychologist, what he thought of while he was skating, and he said happily, "Nothing at all." My friend who works at K.L.M. said, "It's like flying—no, it's better than flying." Unfortunately for the eleven-town tour, a thaw came a day or so too soon.

THE present Dutch attitude toward the sea is not only less anxious than it used to be but also more sophisticated. Most people seem to realize that, as the sea level rises, a serious defense may involve not only sand replenishment and dike raising but getting to the root causes of the greenhouse effect. The problem is thought of less and less as a battle against the sea. Where previous generations were brought up to revere famous reclaimers like Cornelius Lely, the present one sees less need to keep diking and poldering. The shift in attitudes was first apparent in 1965, when a Rijkswaterstaat scheme to enclose and reclaim four thousand hectares of the tidal Wadden Zee, off the north coast, aroused opposition. A successful campaign against the scheme was started by a sixteen-year-old boy, Kees Wevers, who was annoyed by the idea that he would no longer be able to walk out across the mud at low tide to the island of Ameland. He wrote to the press and was soon joined by others who pointed out the threat to marine, bird, and plant life and the importance of shallow waters and marshes in various food chains. Kees Wevers became one of the founders of the Society for the Preservation of the Wadden Zee, which now has sixty-five thousand members and is attempting to mitigate pollution from oil and gas rigs, reduce the disturbing numbers of military exercises and low-flying planes, and promote beneficial development. (Wevers now lives inland, near Utrecht, working on alternative sources of energy.) A similar campaign has just succeeded in spiking a thirty-year-old plan to reclaim one more giant section of the IJsselmeer, which would have become a polder called Markerwaard—long shown as "pending" within dotted lines on Dutch maps. Several factors have brought the government to this decision. One is a lack of demand for new farmland. Another is that new polders are no longer looked to as the answer to urban overcrowding; the new towns built in Flevoland—the last two IJsselmeer polders—to absorb spillover from the Randstad have not been particularly successful.



The kind of water that most Dutch people worry about now is not salt but fresh. Drinking water—which the Dutch, with evident need for distinction, call "sweet water"—is a product of complicated processing in the Netherlands. In the low west of the country, much of the groundwater is not sweet but brackish. Seventy per cent of Dutch drinking water comes from the Rhine and the Meuse, and passes into lakes, reservoirs, and settling areas; before it is drunk, it is piped, pumped, spread, injected, filtered, and treated to make it potable. The Dutch have been bothered about the Rhine for years. The river flows through or borders six countries, and the river basin is in a region where a fifth of the world's dangerous chemicals are produced. Twenty years ago, it became clear that the amounts of PCBs, chlorides, heavy metals, and nutrients in Rhine water were a hazard to human health. Sturgeon and salmon had disappeared from the river. Since 1972, as a result of public alarm, there have been intergovernmental conferences and agreements, and some effective action. Many contaminants have been greatly reduced (mercury by ninety-five per cent, cadmium by ninety-four per cent), but the load of phosphates and nitrogen is still too high; nitrogen in the Rhine has actually increased by forty per cent since 1972. On occasion there may also be exceptional pollution—like the spill of chemicals after a fire at a riverbank warehouse upstream at Basel several years ago—that will trigger warning devices at the sluices and pumping stations where Dutch water is extracted, and cause the intakes to be closed.

For some of their present water trouble the Dutch have only themselves to blame, as their farmland is overloaded with chemical fertilizers, manure, and pesticides, and by-products and residues of these get into the groundwater. At twenty pumping stations the water is thought to be at risk from nitrates. In Gelderland, in the east, there have been reports of babies turning blue, nitrates in their drinking water being the culprit. According to a chemist I know, about three hundred possibly dangerous chemicals can get into the Dutch water supply; tests can be done to check for only ninety. Most of the Dutch, though, have a touching faith in the clear fluid that comes out of their kitchen taps. A leading critic of the use of pesticides told me, "Oh, I trust our water." I've met only one exception—an Amsterdam lawyer who is making sure that his infant child drinks bottled mineral water. ("Spa, from Belgium," he said sardonically; the Dutch are not inclined to praise anything Belgian, but there is no Dutch spring water.)



In the crowded west of the Netherlands, a vital element of the water system is the dunes. Under these coastal sand hills are natural reservoirs of clean water filtered by slow descent through the sand. But the growth of the Randstad has made this supply insufficient. Since 1955, Rhine water has had to be pumped in and infiltrated into the dunes. Today, the dune system is being pushed to its limits, as demand rises from industry, agriculture, and private consumers—who are possibly taking more baths and using their washing machines more, even if they no longer wash their front steps every morning. Amsterdam's water authority is currently exceeding by ten per cent its capacity to produce water that it can be sure meets its own safety standards, and it is looking for ways to increase its supplies. In the area of The Hague, the South Holland Dune Water Company is trying to buy up land used by bulb growers in its catchment area close to the dunes—an expensive effort to get dune water uncontaminated by pesticides, which the bulb farmers have used extravagantly.

One late-winter morning, I walked in the bumpy dunes near Scheveningen with Theo Bakker, a hydrological engineer, who is the nature-conservation officer for the South Holland Dune Water Company. Although water companies and conservation groups are now often allied in efforts to protect the dunes—joining to prevent the expansion of the Rotterdam seaport into the dunes and to defeat a proposed highway through the dunes from The Hague to Haarlem—Bakker sees his job as "slightly schizophrenic," in that he works for a company that wants to produce water at a profitable price for one and a half million people while insuring that the production process doesn't disturb nature, though it can't help doing so. Bakker, a good-humored forty-two-year-old with a droopy Zapata mustache, said he was attempting to hold various conflicting demands in balance: water production; a natural landscape; public use; and the interests of wildlife. The dunes as filtration systems get dirty and have to be cleaned of impurities as delicately as possible. Company workers have to be encouraged to put in piping and pumps by the least offensive methods. The raising and lowering of the water level in the dunes affect what grows there. Dead birches indicate where the sand has been too dry, and rare plant species sometimes appear when the company raises the water level in the "slacks," or shallow dune valleys. The dunes are a so-called Silence Area, protected by law: I could hear the sea pawing the beach. Although we were only a couple of miles from the center of The Hague, the place felt splendidly remote. Only a third of the company's land is open to the public, and the dunes shelter nesting birds and also thick-coated Norwegian ponies; grass grows too lushly because of nitrates in the air, and the ponies help keep it down. "Some grass is wanted to hold the dunes together, but too much grass keeps them too fixed," Bakker told me. There were rabbit tracks in snow that had lightly dusted the sand. I spotted the bushy red-brown tail of a fox just before it disappeared.

"I'd like nature to happen by itself, though as a Dutchman I know the

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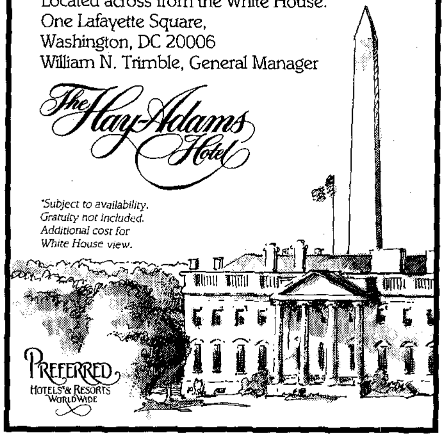
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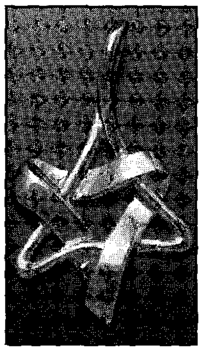

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chances of that are pretty small," Bakker said. "So much of our so-called nature is man-organized, and our approach to conservation is cerebral. Still, I'm happy if I can get people to let nature take its course now and then." To that end, he tries to fend off some of the constricting forces: scientists wanting to conduct tests; owners of four-wheel-drive vehicles; poachers; bird-watchers; golf-course developers; organizers of marathons; planners hoping to build new cycle tracks and footpaths. "So many people want something from the dunes, but you have to draw the line somewhere," Bakker said.

The seaward flank of the dunes is a line, artificially straight at this point—a steep sand cliff that forms the Rijkswaterstaat wall against the North Sea. The sea itself, washing away at the Dutch coastline and stretching out west and north, hides about seven hundred miles of Dutch pipeline that brings undersea gas and oil ashore. On that sea there are more than four hundred thousand ship movements annually. From ships and oil rigs numerous noxious substances get into the sea, as do dumped waste and other contaminants from the rivers that empty into it. (Highly polluted sediment dredged from the Rotterdam port area is now being stored within an offshore ring-dike, an "interim solution" called the Slufter; there was nowhere else to put it.) Much of the contamination is caught in the North Sea's counterclockwise current and carried northeastward into the shallows of the Wadden Zee. There the waters have currently three times the amount of nitrates in them that they should—an effect for which the Rhine is blamed. In the Wadden Zee, the signs have been clear for several years: dead and diseased fish; toxic algae; no sea otters; sick seals.

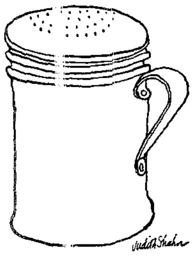
One group passionately concerned with the North Sea is Greenpeace Netherlands. Within an ornate 1910 building on the Keizersgracht in Amsterdam, Greenpeace Netherlands is a highly businesslike operation: it has an expert staff, maintains good contacts in government ministries, enforcement agencies, and the unions, and gets strong support from its members. In the last few years, it has conducted a number of highly visible actions on the North Sea to protest the dumping and incineration of waste at sea. After the Dutch public was aroused, the government played a major role in getting other nations to bring the dumping and burning to a halt.

"The reality is that our government has done well examining the over-all problem but isn't properly solving it," I was told by Jan Bylsma, an analytical chemist in his late thirties, who has worked for Greenpeace for two and a half years. "Discharges of chemicals and dangerous waste have to be reduced. And, to do that, structural changes in industry are needed." So is effective enforcement of existing law. Bylsma's colleague John Arends, a former member of the Rotterdam river police, came to Greenpeace more recently. Chemical waste from Germany had been found on a ship in Rotterdam while Arends was serving there, and he had difficulty in getting hold of a scientific analysis of the ship's cargo. "Greenpeace got us one in a couple of hours," he said. "The waste went back to Germany. I saw that there were other ways of getting things done." Taking on those involved in the often illegal international dangerous-waste trade has done no harm to Greenpeace's reputation as a modern Robin Hood, though the organization here seems to have outgrown its on-the-edge-of-the-law status. Arends told me that one Dutch senior policeman not long ago told a visiting group of American generals that the important thing was to coöperate with Greenpeace, not fight it.

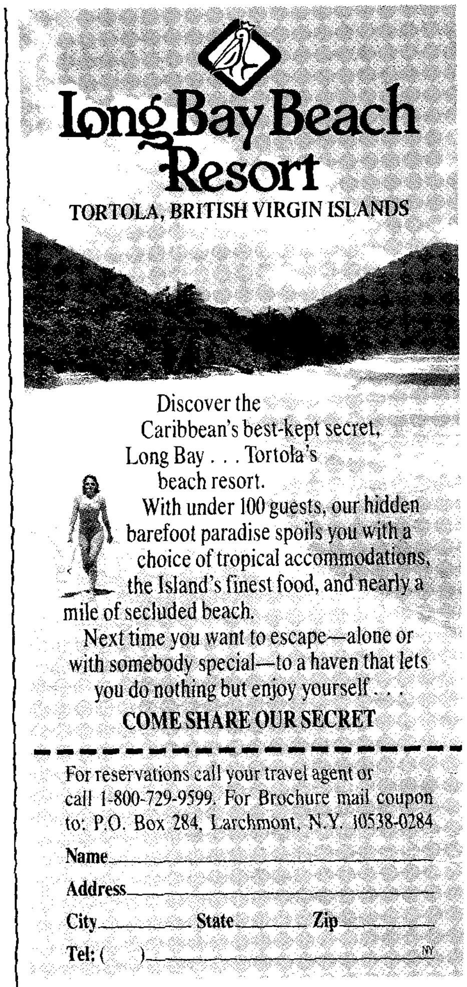
In the last few years, probably one thing more than any other has made the Dutch think of their *milieu:* seals. There were roughly ten thousand seals in Dutch waters in 1900; now there are fewer than six hundred. The Netherlands was the first country to prohibit seal hunting, in 1962, and Greenpeace Netherlands has been campaigning for some time to prevent the injury and death of seals in fishing funnel nets. In 1988, the seals of the North Sea were struck by a mortal sickness—seventeen thousand of them died. Whereas on the German and Danish coasts the sick seals were allowed to die—the Danes, in particular, saying that it was wrong to interfere with nature—the Dutch made an effort to rescue seals and find out what was killing them. A small institution was already in place for this, led by a powerful personality. Lenie 't Hart is a good-looking, straight-haired forty-nine-year-old woman who lives in the village of Pieterburen, close to the Wadden Zee coast, in a part of the country that most Randstad Dutch regard as the end of the world. For the last twenty years, she has been looking after seals. She got started almost accidentally—she was asked to take care of several abandoned baby seals by the town clerk of a nearby community, whose daughter had rescued them but could no longer cope with them. "I worked for the post office, had a husband and a four-year-old child, and was interested in birds—but I said yes," she told me in the course of a walk around her *zeehondencrèche*, a rehabilitation center with a full-time staff of twenty-two aided by half a dozen volunteers. Pieterburen, a mile or so behind a double line of high sea dikes, is a village where seal hunting was practiced within recent memory. In the early seventies, the town was having to face up to the closing of its one shop and one pub, but then Lenie 't Hart's seal center began to attract visitors. Last year, a hundred and seventy-five thousand people came, and the pub and shop are open. The center is a sort of hospital, clinic, lab, and health club, where the sicker seals are kept in indoor cubicles and shallow baths, and those on the mend are out-of-doors in large pens and pools, nestling alongside one another or slithering into the water. They dive, make a few sinuous turns underwater, and bob up, looking like little bald men with big eyes and long whiskers. When I was there, the center had fifty patients; most were common seals, but there were some gray seals. They go through about five hundred pounds of fish a day, trucked in frozen from Scheveningen, and the smell of thawed-out fish is strong.

"Of course, seals arouse great sympathy," Lenie said. "That silky skin, those lovely eyes! And seals have beautiful characters. All our seals have names—like Geesje, Erna, Angela, George. Until 1988, we were dealing mostly with injured adults or orphaned pups—'whiners,' they're called. They're usually found by fishermen or beach strollers who hear them moaning. But then many North Sea seals began to show signs of an unusual sort of distemper and to die of pneumonia. And we were busy! Scientists working here and at R.I.V.M. discovered that the seals had a virus that affected their immune system. We strongly suspect that pollution plays a part in this—that it brings toxic metals and chemicals via seawater and the food chain to accumulate in the blubber, brains, and livers of seals, encouraging bacterial infections and parasites, and weakening their resistance to viruses. PCBs and DDT are already known to cause sterility and miscarriages—the seal birth rate is down ten per cent. Many of our seals arrive with skin lesions, which are slow to heal. The whole business is a warning."

At the Pieterburen seal center, the young seals are fed a thin fish porridge in lieu of mothers' milk. Like small children, they have a lot of problems in their first year and require much attention: they need to be held, fed, hosed down. (Feeding a young seal can be a two-person job, and a wet one.) Sick adults are often kept in quarantine chambers until tests can be done and treatment started. A vaccine against the seal-distemper virus has been developed by Dr. Albert Osterhaus and his colleagues at R.I.V.M. and at the seal center. A solarium with infrared lamps speeds recuperation. Over several months, most of the small and sick seals are brought to the point where they are eating their full whack, and then they are put on a sandbank in the Wadden Zee. During the '88 epidemic, a great number died at the seal center, but now of a hundred or so that arrive annually about eighty-five are restored to health. The center's growing fame brings it foreign seals: several from Northern Irish waters were current guests, as was a Greek monk seal.



Lenie has a flair for attracting national attention. She appears on television, travels around Europe lecturing, gives talks to schools, and answers countless letters, particularly from children, who often ask forthright questions, like how the bodies of dead seals are disposed of. (Answer: Cremation.) The center has forty thousand paying supporters. Lenie says, "Every seal we save here is important for maintaining the species. Every seal also helps us convey the problem to people. At the moment, we're just fighting the symptoms, but I think visitors go away from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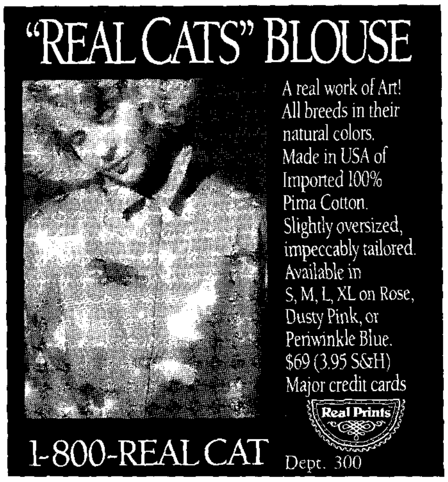
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"Farewell, my liege!"

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here realizing that there have to be big changes in the way we live, and wanting to do something about it. I say to people, 'It has to change inside yourself. Then it will happen.' "

ON land, too, the Dutch are surrounded by problems. The No. 1 problem is manure. In North Brabant, in the south of the country, the rural stench is strong; visitors from other provinces roll up the windows of their cars. It is reckoned that the annual Brabant manure production—about a third of the Dutch total—would fill a string of freight cars more than two thousand miles long, stretching from Brabant to the Urals. Cows, pigs, and poultry generate the dung and the slurry, and the smell would be less powerful if the farms were large enough for all the manure they produce to be plowed in. "As long as Dutch livestock was fed by crops grown on the surrounding land, we were all right," Egbert Tellegen, a professor of environmental science in the Milieukunde Department at the University of Amsterdam, told me. "But our farmers are relying more and more on feed they don't grow themselves. Nowadays we import more feed for animals than food for people. This means that we keep a lot of animals in a very small space with little farmland. The disposal of manure has become impossible." A crucial secondary problem arises from phosphate, nitrates, and ammonia that are produced by the manure: they pollute the land, the water, and the air.

These problems spring largely from success. The Netherlands, with three per cent of the European Community's population, produces sixty per cent of its dairy goods. Dutch cows produce more milk than other cows. There are more pigs in the country than there are people. The Dutch are the second-largest agricultural exporters in the world. They also use the greatest amounts of artificial fertilizer and pesticides per hectare. The number of Dutch farmers is half what it was in 1960, but farming has become increasingly intensive. Other countries are involved, and not just in the European Community, whose agricultural subsidies and quotas partly govern—and overencourage—Dutch farm output. Five times as much land abroad is working for Dutch agriculture as is doing so in Holland. In Thailand, for example, great stretches of the country are given over to producing tapioca, which has largely replaced homegrown maize as an element in Dutch livestock feed, because it is much cheaper.

Twenty years ago, scientists and professors of agriculture warned that too many minerals were going into Dutch soil by way of manure. No one paid much attention. It took time for the troublesome facts to register. In the last five years, numerous reports from various ministries have called attention to the *mest* crisis, and in the last two years stern regulations have been introduced. I recently visited North Brabant, where just about everyone is in agriculture or is related to someone who is; it is the sort of area where farmers spend any free time visiting other farms. In Tilburg, one of the main towns in the province, I talked with Ad Latijnhouwers, a tall man in his late fifties, who views both sides of the problem, for he is chairman of both the North Brabant Christian Farmers Union, to which most local farmers belong, and the Mestbank, a government-backed initiative to collect surplus manure and sell it to farmers in parts of Holland and Europe where it is needed. Latijnhouwers, the son of a farmer, said that the farmers in North Brabant, like other Dutch farmers, had for a long time been encouraged to produce more. "They're used to getting a prompt return on any investment. But now they're being asked to invest in changes they don't see the immediate effect of—except, possibly, as *lower* production. Small farmers—and we are mostly small farmers, from big families—feel the restrictions most. We've had many complaints and a few demonstrations, with angry farmers blocking roads with their tractors."

The regulations, imposed by a new Soil Protection Act, deal with the amount of manure, measured by phosphate content, that can be spread on one's land. Since spreading is now prohibited in some months, covered holding tanks are required. The legal allowable level of phosphates will be reduced in a few years, and the reduction will cause further difficulty for the farmers. The Brabant soil was poor a century ago, and the farmers here have got used to thinking of their muck as valuable. Now they have to learn that surplus manure may cost them money: the Mestbank charges them for carting it away. They have to keep a "manure book," giving details of all they put on their land. Latijnhouwers said, "The threat overhanging us is this: The government says that if we don't manage to deal with six million tons of manure a year, we can't have so many animals. In order to deal with the problem, a farmer needs a proper income. With fewer animals, will his farm be viable? Can our farmers put up prices and not have their customers buying from Denmark and Germany? We hope the other countries of the European Community follow our lead."

An old Dutch saying is "*Mest is geen heiligheijt maar doet mirakelen waar hij leit*"—"Manure is not a holy thing but from where it lies there come miracles." The Dutch can't rely on miracles to look after their manure surplus, however. Piet Deenen, a thirty-four-year-old agronomist, took me on a tour of the local countryside and showed me some new technology that is being brought to bear: huge octopuslike machines for injecting manure into the soil, where its emissions of ammonia will be less; manure-extraction devices in battery chicken farms and giant pigsties, designed to reduce emissions into the air; and ventilation systems that discharge the ammonia-rich stench through filters of various sorts. I learned that piglets are healthier in new sties fitted with mechanical sweepers that from time to time remove the manure from beneath grilles in the floors. (The longer manure is left, the more ammonia it produces.) On the Brabant roads, trucks carrying livestock feed pass tanker trucks carrying liquid manure—the "in" and "out" trays of farming life. Some of the manure trucks are going to Promest, a pilot plant for processing pig slurry into dry fertilizer pellets. Although several people I talked to doubted whether the process could cope with all the surplus pig manure and turn out a cheap enough fertilizer, the plant's managers were hopeful. One of them told me that demand from Portuguese and French farmers and winegrowers exceeded what the plant could supply. (The product costs roughly the same as artificial fertilizer.) One problem the plant hasn't completely solved is smell; it is in a new industrial area outside the town of Helmond and is starkly without neighbors. The process—using air, bacteria, and heat—is similar to sewage treatment, and the resulting water is said to be drinkable. (On a recent visit, Queen Beatrix was offered a glass of the water, which she sipped, though she looked none too happy about it.) In any case, some here think the manure situation can't be solved by these attempts to tackle just the effects. Another Low Countries saying is illustrated in Pieter Brueghel the Younger's painting "Dutch Proverbs," in the Frans Hals Museum, in

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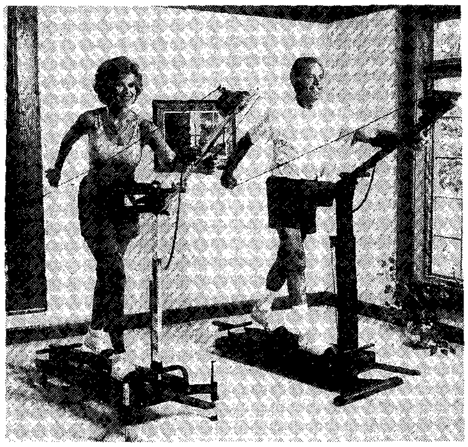

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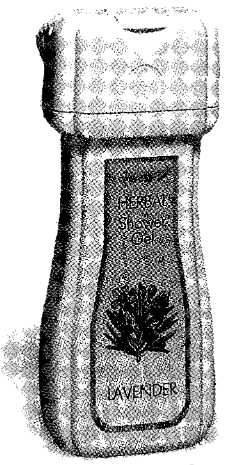

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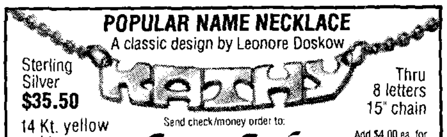

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Haarlem, which shows among various goings on a man shovelling a pile of manure. The saying is "*Als het kalf verdronken is, dempt men de put*," or "After the calf has drowned, then you fill in the well"—the Dutch version of bolting the stable door after the horse has been stolen.

OTHER farms, other problems. In the bulb fields, an area of eighteen thousand hectares between the dunes, Leiden, Haarlem, and Schiphol Airport, about two thousand tons of pesticide is sprayed every year, about twelve times as much per acre as is used on the average Dutch farm. This spraying is close to the water-extraction areas and to densely populated communities. After one bulb worker became very ill in 1982, an investigation was made by a toxicologist, F. A. de Wolff, into the health of a hundred and thirty-seven bulb growers and workers, some of them at least twenty-year veterans of the bulb business. In a number of the workers Dr. de Wolff discovered skin problems and damage to the nervous system. There were also indications of kidney and liver damage in a small group that had used the pesticide dichloropropene.

In May, a bill proposing to cut pesticide use in half by the year 2000 came before the Dutch Parliament; it will be discussed later this year. It includes a plan for crop protection that involves requiring official prescriptions for pesticide use, adding a levy, promoting biological forms of pest control, and using steam to disinfect the subsoil. The plan will cost Dutch farmers at least a billion two hundred million dollars between now and 2000 and will probably cause the loss of many small farms. It has already claimed a major casualty—one of its chief begetters, Dr. Eric Goewie, the director of the Ministry of Agriculture's Plant Protection Service. Having devoted four years to the plan, and got it to a point where four other ministries backed it, Goewie found himself in a difficult spot. His minister, Gerrit Braks, had resigned after a bruising fight with Dutch fishermen about overfishing, and a new minister was in charge. Tension in the ministry was high between the lawyers who draw up the rules and the scientific experts: there were quarrels about what could and could not be done in practice. Some of the new management systems that were envisaged threatened the jobs of some civil servants. Goewie decided that he lacked confidence in his ministry's will to make the plan stick. Politicians come up for election every four years, and in the Netherlands, as elsewhere, they like short-term success. The costs of the plan are going to be unpopular with farmers, and no Dutch Minister of Agriculture wants to be unpopular. In November of last year, after a painful period of delay and argument, Goewie was abruptly offered a new job in his ministry, involving much work abroad. He resigned. Ten other scientists who had worked on the plan left with him.

I went to see Dr. Goewie at a think tank in The Hague, the Advisory Council for Science and Technology Policy, of which he is now secretary. A trimly bearded man in his forties, Goewie said that he wasn't angry about the loss of his post at the ministry; in fact, he thought that the attention his departure had received in the Dutch press had increased the legislation's chances of being passed. The plan represented the first occasion on which environmental considerations had been fully taken into account at the Ministry of Agriculture in the framing of new regulations. In public discussions now going on about the plan, most of the farming unions were supporting it, despite what they saw as high costs. Some environmentalists were unhappy about the generous length of time being proposed for reducing pesticide use. But Goewie believed that you had to put yourself in the farmer's boots; it was the farmer who was the basis of change, and there was no point in simply forbidding all use of pesticides (as Greenpeace had proposed), because then farmers would just use pesticides illegally. Last year, pesticides already banned here were imported from East Germany and apparently bought by some Dutch farmers. It was better to explain to farmers how they could save money by using less pesticide and trying biological pest control—employing natural predators instead of reaching for a spray whenever they saw a caterpillar on a leaf. "Farmers have to learn how to enhance their produce in safe ways," he said. "This may mean they have to grow less. But environmentalists have to be realistic about the changes that farmers can readily make. I think our plan is a good start and will be accepted by

Parliament and enforced. The European Commission in Brussels is now looking at it as a model for all Europe."

In the bulb-field village of Noordwijkerhout, Theo Pennings runs a third-generation business of growing and exporting tulip, hyacinth, and daffodil bulbs. Manipulating nature comes easy to bulb farmers. Pennings, a smartly dressed middle-aged man, who has a son at the University of Florida, showed me how the water level in his fields was controlled by small canals, ditches, sluices, and pumps, to achieve the correct degree of moistness for bulb propagation. Machines now did much of the work of planting, picking, and sorting, and mechanical weeders had replaced the hoe. It was early March, and green shoots were beginning to appear through the sandy soil. The flowers themselves are cut early—the tulips in April—in order to make the bulbs grow more quickly, and are discarded if wholesale flower prices are low. Pennings told me that he had seen the pesticide problem coming. "People were being too free with it, often using a bit more 'just in case,' " he said. "Five years ago, I, too, was pouring the chemicals in the tank, adding a few hundred litres of water, and spraying—and afterward didn't really know what I'd done. Now I know. I've had to buy an expensive computer-controlled sprayer—only the bigger growers are doing this. But I'm undoubtedly using smaller amounts of chemicals, and I'm willing to look at alternatives if they exist. Before fertilizing, I have soil samples examined, so that I know what the soil needs. I used to disinfect the soil with chemicals every year. Now I do so every two or three years. It's trial and error, but an error can mean a lost crop through blight or infection, and be very costly. Another thing is that when we use smaller amounts of soil disinfectants, as the new rules demand, we'll have to rotate our crops more widely. Instead of a three-year cycle, growing hyacinths, tulips, and daffodils in turn in a single field, we're moving to four—possibly five—crops in consecutive years. Maybe we plant gladioli or crocus. Maybe we put in vegetables, or even grass. But this is expensive land, and we need crops that make money. Another solution, which the government is hinting at, is for us to grow less. I'd be happy to do that—it would mean less work—if we'd earn as much as we do now. But that would mean that people would be paying more for their bulbs."

In northwest Brabant, close to the Delta, I met a farmer who has taken the leap into farming without pesticides. Piet Boons is one of forty-five Dutch farmers who practice what they call "ecological agriculture." A balding, cheerful man who is a third-generation farmer, Boons keeps eighty holstein-friesian black-and-white cows on forty acres. As we walked around his farmyard, he told me that he had "gone organic" because of worries about the *milieu*, and particularly about the safety of drinking water. He had previously been cutting back on artificial fertilizers and pesticides, and then he had taken a course in organic dairy farming and had met the managers of an organic dairy looking for more raw milk. That was a year ago, and he has been farming organically since then. "That is, as organically as I can," he said. "There's not much I can do immediately about what's in the air and water my cows breathe and drink." Some critics say that organic farming is for the lily-livered. Boons disagrees. "It's harder work, in fact," he explained. "You have to hoe the ground, not use weed killers. You have to think your way around problems in advance instead of trying to cure them afterward. I grow for fodder a mixture of ryegrass and clover which naturally produces nitrogen and is a good substitute for artificial fertilizer. But I've had to get used to lower milk production—and I was No. 1 in these parts! This herd was annually producing eighty-five hundred litres of milk per cow and is now producing seventy-five hundred, but that's still a thousand litres higher than the Dutch average for this size herd. On the plus side, the milk sells for a higher price, and the cows are a little less hard-worked. And although the organic feed compound I give them is more expensive, the minerals going into the soil from the manure are in better balance, and are below the limits proposed for the year 2000. All our manure can be injected on our land, so there's no surplus to transport away and pay a levy on."

Mr. Boons markets most of his milk

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through the organic dairy, but three days a week his wife runs a shop on the farm. Roughly a hundred customers come in during the week to buy the Boonses' milk, butter, and cheeses, including a nettle cheese, which has a nice fragrance and no sting at all.

I asked Boons what the neighboring farmers had to say.

"Some are still a bit sour," he told me. "One said to me recently, 'I hear you've gone back to spraying'—though I haven't. They're not as confident as they were. My nephew farms, and he's going ecological this year. The new pesticide laws will convert many. The risks of losing a crop of fodder are a bit more and the hours are longer, but the quality is higher and the pleasure is greater. I get a lot of agricultural-college students visiting. I think Dutch farmers—and Dutch consumers—will see that this is the only way we can go."

THE MARKETPLACE

I wandered in the Agora
like the pious in a cloister.
Reconstructed pillared arcade, was it
at the foot of columns like these
Athenians met and argued,
some with goods, some with ideas,
like you, Father?

Later, at the flea market in Pláka,
an old man sat on the ground
selling small wooden carvings.
His old-fashioned hearing aid,
with flesh-colored wire,
conjured you up for me that night
in a dream, for now my life
has a dream time and a dream line
and what was root
now leafs and branches.

I dreamed you and I
went walking as we used to do
and met the homeless man
you always stopped to talk with
before reaching into your pocket
for change.
The notes of an ocarina seller
warmed the air while crowds
pushed us along.

That morning, I bought an owl
carved from olivewood
from the man,
wanting to touch his veined hand,
knowing he would soon go down,
unacknowledged, to abide
in death's democracy with you, Father,
both of you among the fortunate
with something to exchange.

—Celia Gilbert

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WITH his pastures less than a mile from a motorway, and only thirty miles from Rotterdam, Mr. Boons is right to doubt his ability to farm completely organically. In 1989, a number of dairy farms—though not his—near Rotterdam, Amsterdam, and Leeuwarden were forbidden to sell their milk after high levels of dioxin were found in it. The dioxin was traced to waste-incineration plants on the outskirts of those cities, and these supposedly environmentally useful facilities had to be closed—some for adjustment, one permanently. In Rotterdam during the Gulf War, sales of gas masks boomed: the citizenry feared a terrorist attack on the city's vast petrochemical works, and resultant toxic clouds. (Residents of slightly less polluted cities wonder why Rotterdammers don't wear gas masks all the time.) In various parts of the country, air-monitoring stations collect information for broadcast on the Teletext service. The concentrations of ozone in Dutch air are sometimes the highest in Europe, and are not good for Dutch lungs. Three departments of the agricultural university at Wageningen are currently investigating the effects of acid rain. One visible effect is that trees in the Dutch woods are dying, with some forty per cent of conifers affected. The number of deciduous trees blighted is smaller, but when the victims are concentrated, as they are in Gaasterland, a three-hundred-year-old beech wood in Friesland, people take notice. Yet the air is probably cleaner than it would be if the Dutch had to rely heavily on imported coal to run their power stations; instead, they have a windfall of natural gas, with reserves likely to last until 2025.

In addition to the emissions of agriculture and industry, fumes rising into the air from traffic present a serious problem. A term used by Dutch traffic experts for traffic movement, *circulation*, is a misnomer. In the Randstad during the morning and evening rush hours, there are often sixty-mile-long traffic jams. All the statistics to do with cars—numbers, use, accidents—are going up: though the Dutch have what most foreigners regard as one of the best public-transport systems in the world, many people here prefer to sit alone, seething, in their cars and watch the trains whizz past.

The government is currently making its second attempt in two years to do something about the situation. In May, 1989, plans were put forward which included the abolition of tax relief for commuting by car—a measure intended to raise revenue for public transport and to discourage driving into cities—but one party in the coalition withdrew its support, and the government fell. Now, to meet the demands of the National Environmental Policy Plan, rush-hour tolls will be charged on city access roads, tunnels, and bridges, and more than ten billion dollars is to be spent on new high-speed rail links and new canals for heavy freight. (As it is, Dutch canals do a splendid job of moving cargoes like sand, oil, and timber. On the main Amsterdam-Rhine canal, processions of big steel barges pass each other all day long.) The tax measures that make it less attractive to drive to work have been put into effect. Five new road tunnels that were to have been constructed have been strongly opposed as encouraging driving into cities, and now only one, in Rotterdam, is to be built. One recent measure has given all students free travel on public transport. Although some college students have complained that their state grants had been cut to balance this largesse, the trains and buses I've been on recently have been crammed with young people.

Despite the failure of a scheme, tried out in Amsterdam in the seventies, to make bicycles available to everyone (it was brought to an end by theft and vandalism), the Dutch are still to be seen pedalling in thick flocks and scattered convoys on their sit-up-and-beg machines. Most city streets and country roads have bike lanes, and woe betide the unwitting pedestrian who trespasses on one of them. After a snowstorm in mid-February, I was walking along a bike path in The Hague that—unlike the adjacent slippery sidewalk—had been cleared of snow, when a bike came up behind me, its bell ringing furiously and its rider giving me an angry look and a cross word as he rode past. (Living in such close quarters, the Dutch feel that any violation of their demarcation lines is a provocative act; I got into similar trouble with a museum guard when I stepped over a line I hadn't seen on the floor to take a closer look at a van Gogh.) In Amsterdam, the concentric canals and narrow streets create an inhospitable environment for most vehicles; the trams—electric-powered and fume-free—are preëminent, and new tracks are now being laid to expand the network. Fortunately, attempts in the sixties to fill in canals and build wider streets came to little—except on the Wibautstraat, a desolate street lined mostly with municipal offices. There is even talk of reducing the number of parking spaces, though some city councillors are worried that business will move to Rotterdam if that happens. Amsterdam took action against pollution in the fifteenth century, when statutes were promulgated against the dumping of dead horses, pigs, cows, sheep, and dogs in the canals. However, a sewer system in the city center was completed only ten years ago; until then, all sewage went into the canals, which were "flushed" every night. Perhaps because the canals no longer stink, complaints about industrial stenches have increased, and the number of environmental inspectors has been increased as well. One city official told me, "All the parties represented on the council have green policies now. But finding real solutions costs money, and that's never easy." A very welcome measure that went into effect at New Year's imposed high penalties for dog *mest* on Amsterdam sidewalks, but so far the city's dogs don't seem to have got the message.

IN the year 1000, many people expected the world to come to an end. As 2000 approaches and various plans and policies shimmer in the Randstad haze, some of the Dutch are beset by similar millennial feelings. In February, a group of ecological savants met in Rotterdam for a symposium entitled flatly "The End." Queen Beatrix, in her Christmas message two years ago, referred to the Club of Rome, Luther, and Jesus, and declared, "The earth is slowly dying, and the inconceivable—the end of life itself—is actually becoming conceivable." A belief in Heaven and Hell, once replaced in many by a belief in Dutch technological ability to handle all problems, may be on the point of return. ("Concern for Tomorrow" alludes to "psychosocial difficulties" arising from the physical effects of pollution and the perception people have that the world is polluted.) Wouter van Dieren, who chaired the Rotterdam symposium, told me he thought that the Dutch ability to organize a livable and likable society—the cleverness at arranging a lot of people in a small space with limited resources—was reaching its limits. "We're coming close to the point where we can't manage," he said.

Van Dieren himself, however, is in many ways an example of environmentalist success. A fifty-year-old sometime journalist and TV producer who has long been active in campaigns to save the Amsterdam canals and the Markerwaard, and a founder of several Dutch *milieu* organizations, he now runs a firm called IMSA (the acronym of the Dutch for Institute for Environment and Systems Analysis), with a staff of thirty, which provides help for companies faced with environmental problems. He says, "Some companies just want a P.R. exercise, but we try to get them to look deeply at what they're doing and how to do it better." His clients include a supermarket chain, several fertilizer manufacturers, an oil company, the province of South Holland (which includes Rotterdam), and the Dutch refuse-processing trade organization. He is currently acting as referee in a dispute between the largest maker of disposable diapers and its critics, and is trying to get the diaper-maker to experiment with new waste-composting techniques. Although Dutch consumers are becoming wary of "green-speak" in advertising, as firms use eco-packaging and labelling to sell their products, they retain a desire to do good as they buy. A new brand of coffee, Max Havellaar (it's named after the hero of a nineteenth-century novel that examined the dreadful conditions of Dutch East Indies coffee-plantation workers), has been promoted as a product of countries with progressive agricultural policies, and it has gained two and a half per cent of the market within a year of being launched, even though it costs ten per cent more than other brands. The Dutch have switched wholeheartedly to phosphate-free detergents, have got rid of PVC packaging (this feat was achieved through a six-month consumer boycott led by Milieu Defensie), and are actually using less energy in their homes. And, what is perhaps

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most important, Dutch children are generally getting a green education. Wout, the eleven-year-old son of friends of mine, who has a spiky crewcut and wears braces on his teeth, told me about environmental petitions he and his class signed, *milieu* posters they had on their classroom walls, and "study lessons" they had done on preserving nature and using the correct recycling boxes for their garbage. Wout knew that you shouldn't throw things in the canals, and that is a great step forward for Dutch boys. However, when I asked him what he wanted most of all in life he said, "A fast speedboat, like on 'Magnum, P. I.' "

So far in this battle, many people here think, there have been more words than deeds. The National Environmental Policy Plan has been criticized for not demanding enough structural changes to deal with the causes of problems, though it recommends plenty of technical measures to deal with the effects. Teo Wams, the policy coördinator for Milieu Defensie, told me, "The fact that the plan gives foreigners an impression of effective environmental policy says more about the P.R. skills of the Dutch government than about the quality of its policies." Wams wants a stronger commitment to reduced growth and less attention to the pleadings of affected parties, whether they are farmers, motorists, or chemical manufacturers. "The government still clings to the dangerous idea that a sustainable society can be achieved without harming any sectional interest group. Precious time for the development of effective instruments is being lost."

One gauge of the government's willingness to make difficult decisions will be provided by the proposed expansion of Schiphol Airport. The country's main airport, Schiphol is built on a nineteenth-century polder called the Haarlemermeer, bounded by Amsterdam, the bulb fields, and a ring of bedroom communities in what planners have called—somewhat fancifully, it now seems—the Green Heart of the Randstad. The airport has excellent highway and rail connections. Because it is the base of K.L.M. and the European point of arrival for many tourists and businesspeople, it has importance as a "motor" of the Dutch economy and as a symbol of the Netherlands' position in the modern world. It furnishes a speedy way of exporting Dutch products, from tulips to electric kettles. Many companies have set up in the Haarlemermeer to be near the airport. The airport and airline suppliers are major employers. However, Schiphol sees itself in competition with three other leading European airports—Heathrow, Charles de Gaulle, and Frankfurt—as a gateway and hub for transfer traffic and cargo distribution. The authority that runs Schiphol believes that it has to fight to maintain its role as a "mainport," and that expansion is the only way to do so: more passengers, more cargo, doubling the number of flights over the next ten years, building a fifth runway. The government has initiated a plan whose two main goals are "the growth of Schiphol and the improvement of the quality of the environment."

So far, the most searching public study of the matter has been done by graduate students in Egbert Tellegen's Milieukunde Department at the University of Amsterdam. They note of the plan's goals, "It will be hard to reach both . . . because they are largely contradictory." Wouter van Dieren says, "The plan to expand Schiphol is a case of expansion neurosis—growth at all costs." As things are at the moment, some twenty per cent of the Dutch claim to be bothered by aircraft noise. Many people live under the flight paths into and out of Schiphol, and the number of complaints keeps rising. The town of Aalsmeer, where the negotiations at the great flower market are often drowned out by jet roar, is now suing the airlines whose planes fly too low. Although there is to be a ban on night flying after 1993, Schiphol has been granted an exemption, allowing it as many as five thousand night flights a year. Studies carried out in the Schiphol area in the early seventies linked plane noise with sleep disturbances, hypertension, heart problems, and stomach complaints. The airport is also accused of being a major source of air pollution (abetted by car traffic to and fro). A hundred thousand new houses are currently planned for the area, so more and more people will be affected one way or another by the decision on Schiphol.

ONE afternoon not long ago, I drove out of Amsterdam into Flevoland in a small car with two men and a bird of prey. My companions were Wim Huiskens, a small, bearded Dutch-literature teacher and a licensed falconer, and Michiel Hötte, a lanky twenty-nine-year-old environmental economist, who was two years into a three-year apprenticeship to become a falconer. In the unlit trunk, sitting quietly, was Albertine, a five-year-old goshawk bred in captivity. Huiskens exercises Albertine and Schoontjes, a peregrine falcon he also owns, on alternate days, and this was Albertine's day. This suited Michiel, who had let me know that he thought Wim's falcon a bit tame. With the goshawk, the only problem was that she flew so fast off the mark, and was so rapidly lethal, that you barely saw what was happening.

Michiel grew up in the village of Baarn, twenty miles from Amsterdam, obsessed with hawks. He remembers seeing his first, a sparrow hawk, when he was seven. "I looked up," he told me, "and there it was, circling, not just flying, over its domain, and I thought, He owns the sky." At that time, birds of prey were faring poorly, because of DDT and modern farming practices. Michiel put out nesting boxes for kestrels and owls, and he began to keep and train sparrow hawks and goshawks, which is illegal without a license. As a university student, he kept a goshawk in his room for a while, having partitioned off a separate chamber for it. He has made several trips to India and Indonesia to watch falcons. There are a hundred and twenty licensed falconers in the Netherlands, and Michiel, after some time on a waiting list to become an apprentice, has to spend two or three afternoons a week working with a falconer, picking up enough lore so he can pass a final test for a license. There are a hundred and twenty-four goshawks and sixty peregrine falcons in the Netherlands, all kept by falconers. It is Michiel's ambition to reintroduce peregrine falcons as a wild breeding species into the Netherlands—something they have not been for at least a century.

Out in the polder, Wim parked the car, hung a falconer's bag of dark suède over his shoulder and a whistle on a cord around his neck, then pulled on a big leather gauntlet over his left hand. On this he perched Albertine, with her jesses, or leg straps, twined through his fingers; on another strap was a little bell. She was slightly larger than a peregrine, Michiel said. She had immense orange-yellow eyes, brown-and-white striped breast plumage, and hooked yellow talons. Now and then, she beat her wings impatiently; he stroked her breast to soothe her. We walked across flat plowed land, as regular in shape as a football field, to a strip of grass lying between a straight-sided copse of scrappy young trees and a broad drainage canal, also as straight as a line in a Mondrian or the back of a Rietveld chair. While Wim, with Albertine, walked slowly up the middle of the strip, Michiel, with me in attendance, beat the dry rushes at the canal edge, hoping to rouse a rabbit. Over the flat landscape the sky was immense. A heron flounced off, and a pair of ducks whirred away on the far side of the canal. I asked Michiel about his proposed project.

“The peregrine falcon has the widest distribution of any bird in the world,” he said. “We get a number wintering here but none breeding—they go back to Scandinavia for that. It's a strange gap on the bird map. The peregrine may have once bred here. Certainly, it was *the* noble hunting bird—there's even a small town in the south of the country called Valkenswaard, ‘the place of the falconers.’ I want to bring in some fledglings from Germany, at least fifty of them, two or three weeks old—that's about a week before they start to fly—and establish them in a box out here in the polder. You have to feed them through a pipe, so they won't be imprinted by a human being. They've got their own company in the box, so they'll know they're peregrines. You feed the young close to the box, and then they start hunting nearby and slowly become independent. You hope some will come back to the spot—*their* spot—to breed. About half will die in the first year, but if you're lucky maybe a third will return.”

I asked when he was going to do this. (Albertine, on Wim's glove, had just had another restless moment, flapping her powerful wings. Where were all the rabbits?)

Michiel said, “I've had difficulties with the National Bird Association. They said my breeding project is an attempt to manipulate nature. I say this whole country is the result of manipulating nature. What is nature here? People think they've been ‘out in nature’ if they've spent an hour cycling on a road by a canal bank. The problem may be that we no longer have any real nature as a reference point, so we don't know what it is. We don't notice when some birds and animals disappear. The otter has gone—the last one was in Overijssel, but we realized that it had gone only when its tracks were no longer seen. There are more crows and gulls now—other birds have been forced out by farming, by pollution, by people. In any case, we're vaccinating the seals to keep them alive. The peregrine falcon died out in the United States and in Germany and has been successfully reintroduced. Once we get it started, it may do well here. It's adaptable, and many of the birds that thrive here—particularly pigeons—are its natural prey. Perhaps even wildness has to be manipulated. For the bird itself it doesn't matter whether its reintroduction is brought about by man or happens accidentally. So I'm presenting my case again, and writing it up as an article for *Vogels*, the bird magazine. I think I'll convince them.”

Our conversation was interrupted by a black blur—up, out, down. Ahead on the canal bank, there was a flurry in the reeds. Wim, both hands now free, ran to the spot. Albertine, wings out and beak pecking mercilessly at gray fur, had caught a rabbit. I hadn't properly seen it happen. The goshawk sat protectively over her kill. Wim now had to practice other elements of his craft. He took bits of crow from his leather bag and worked them between Albertine and the rabbit. When she momentarily switched her attention to the black feathers, he got her back on his glove and made her jesses fast again. Michiel dispatched the rabbit with an abrupt pull that broke its neck. The rabbit went into Wim's bag, and the small body of a baby chick was brought out as Albertine's reward.

Apart from a paltry coot, which Albertine caught a bit later, that was the day's hunting. Michiel was a bit apologetic about the scanty catch. I told him not to worry. I hadn't seen nature quite so red in tooth and claw for a long time, and I found it cheering that I had been able to do so in Holland.

—ANTHONY BAILEY

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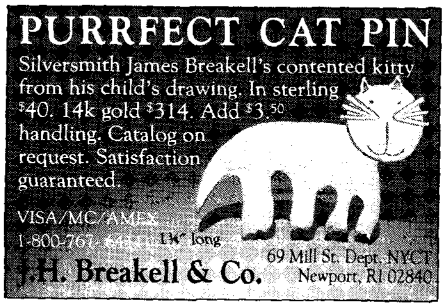

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MUSICAL EVENTS

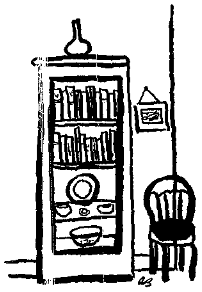
Pretty Woman

Wagner's "Good people, do something *new! new!* and once again *new!*" is often invoked to justify novel treatments of old operas. It occurs in an 1852 letter to Liszt and is in fact a protest against tinkering with old operas instead of getting on with the creation of new operas. In the very same letter Wagner tells Liszt that, for the guidance of stage managers and singers, he has had printed a pamphlet of instructions for the performance of his "Tannhäuser"; and in the pamphlet he says that if his directions for the second-act processional entry are not followed "then I merely beg the band to play some march from 'Norma' or 'Belisario,' but not my music." Tinkering with old operas has a long history, and, inevitably, it has become more common as the basic repertory grows ever older and ambitious directors seek ways of refreshing it. The results are sometimes exciting, sometimes tiresome and even destructive. Critical generalizations about the fashion for shifting epochs and altering actions are seldom helpful; much depends on the nature of the opera concerned, much on the merits of the particular director in a particular show. The Purchase "Giulio Cesare" (directed by Peter Sellars), the English National Opera's "Rusalka" (directed by David Pountney), the Metropolitan Opera's "Flying Dutchman" (directed by Jean-Pierre Ponnelle), and the Long Beach "King Roger" (directed by David Alden) had little in common beyond altered scenarios and settings different from any prescribed. When reviewing them, I tried to explain why I admired the first two, detested the other two.

The New York City Opera's new production of "La Traviata," which opened last month, comes to us from Tulsa and is directed by Nicholas Muni. It is "set in the present"; Violetta is "a professional escort." Mr. Muni and his designer, John Conklin, have rewritten Verdi's scenic directions, but, as is usual in these reworkings, the sung text is unaltered. In Paris, the characters converse in Italian; the currency is still louis; Violetta pays for her country idyll by selling her horses and carriages; and she dies of consumption. Or so we hear. What we see is rather different. Superficial—on occasion, even fundamental—incongruence between what is said and what is shown can be a useful theatrical resource. Opera, whose characters go through life accompanied by a full orchestra, is not a realistically representational art. From the start, it claimed all means and all manners of dramatic expression as its province, combining the resources of verbal and musical dramas, of acting and singing and dancing and scenic spectacle, of continuous narrative and formal repetition, of vocal music and instrumental music. From combinations and contradictions it forged the art that has occupied composers and audiences for nearly four centuries. Three simple, famous examples: Penelope's monologue at the start of Monteverdi's "Ritorno d'Ulisse" is a free flow of sad thoughts flowingly and freely composed but formally punctuated by a chromatic refrain, "Torna, deh torna, Ulisse"; when Gluck's Orestes, in "Iphigénie en Tauride," sings "Le calme rentre dans mon cœur," the turbulent orchestra gives the lie to his words ("that masterpiece of dramatic expression, that alone would be enough to hand down the name of Gluck with honour to all time," Ernest Newman wrote nearly a hundred years ago); when Mime, in the forest scene of "Siegfried," presses a drugged drink on the hero, he employs the most wheedling, dulcet phrases at his command while, this time, the words give the lie to the music. These effects were planned by their composers. When a modern director decides to add effects of his own, much depends on the context in which he presents them. In plain, straightforward accounts of "Il Trovatore" one is jolted if Leonora, declaring that she is at the Count's feet and is bathing them with a stream of bitter tears, remains resolutely standing; in a many-layered, unrealistic Sellars production of a Mozart opera, with many points of dramatic reference, it can make sense for someone to speak of

"I know I haven't been much of a master to you, but then again you haven't been much of a pet to me."

a sword and pull out a revolver. The chronological contradictions of the City Opera "Traviata"—transport by horse and carriage in a city of cordless telephones and big-screen television—prove less disturbing than does its failure to draw the listeners into Violetta and Alfredo's emotional life. The musical achievement, to be sure, is no more than moderate, but that is nothing new or unusual; more about it later. It is on the staging that the production stakes its first claim to our attention.



Perhaps there is one critical generalization that can be consistently applied: deploration of merely modish, unthinking recourse to the clichés of modern staging—mimed overture, dark glasses, black leather coats, metal bedsteads, wheelchairs, television screens, telephones, light bulbs, bare feet, nudity or near-nudity, simulated copulation—as if simply by their introduction an opera staled by routine could be freshened. The new "Traviata" includes all of them except a wheelchair, but here they are employed in a critical spirit, not unthinkingly. Mr. Muni is the man who in St. Louis recently turned Ariadne's grief-stricken "Ein Schönes war" into a barrel of laughs but redeemed himself thereafter with an arresting and poetic commentary on what the act of performing Hofmannsthal and Strauss's seventy-five-year-old "Ariadne auf Naxos" today might mean to its interpreters. The Prima Donna, not Ariadne, became the heroine; the audience, watching, was invited to share her thoughts and feelings, and those of the eager young Composer. Well, "Ariadne" is at least in part an opera about the way opera works. "La Traviata" is not. Mr. Muni offers not so much Verdi's "La Traviata" as a thorough investigation into the common practice of the modern stage. Using the familiar and well-loved work as a laboratory, he tests contemporary methods and clichés to breaking point—and beyond.

The prelude to "La Traviata," most people agree, is a portrait of the heroine, with the E-major melody representing her love for Alfredo and its flighty counterpoint the enforced gaiety of her professional life. The counterpoint subsides with a pang into the first of many trills—some slow and desolate (and here to the note below), some feverishly brilliant—that mark the score. With a brutal contrast, the curtain rises on the glitter of the party; woodwinds trill shrilly and fast on the note that ended the prelude. Directors who choose to stage this prelude usually give us a Violetta lost in reflection, thinking back over her brief life and its brief idyll, remembering the party at which she first met Alfredo—and then entering into a flashback enactment of it. The City Opera program synopsis starts, "Having survived a long bout with a serious illness, Violetta . . . is throwing a party to get back into circulation. The guests breeze in to look her over." During the prelude, Violetta nervously checks her makeup, several times; toward the close, Baron Douphol enters with Gastone ("her manager") and hands him a wad of bills to secure the hostess's post-party services. Then, at the *allegro brillantissimo e molto vivace*, the guests, dressed in black, stalk on in slow, sinister fashion. This party has no gaiety—except in the pit.

To launch his brindisi, Alfredo strums at Violetta's piano, and at his miming the sound of a full orchestra (without piano) breaks forth. Mr. Muni draws attention to the "unrealistic" ever-present orchestra and invites us to think consciously about the role of "actual music" in a drama where everything is sung. During a performance of Strauss's "Capriccio" (which has nice interplays between the "invisible" instrumental music in the pit and a string sextet, a harpsichord, a harp belonging to the enacted drama and played by onstage characters), such thoughts are appropriate, for "Capriccio" is an opera about opera. But in "La Traviata" Verdi worked with a different convention, one that should surely pass unquestioned during an actual performance.

Modern directors often fear soliloquies. At the City Opera, while Violetta sings "Ah fors'è lui" Baron Douphol waits patiently upstage; when he hears her decision to "perish amid the vortices of voluptuousness," he comes forward and begins to undress, exposing a hairy body. The audience laughs. Alfredo begins Act II by singing "De' miei bollenti spiriti" to his tennis partner. When Violetta tells

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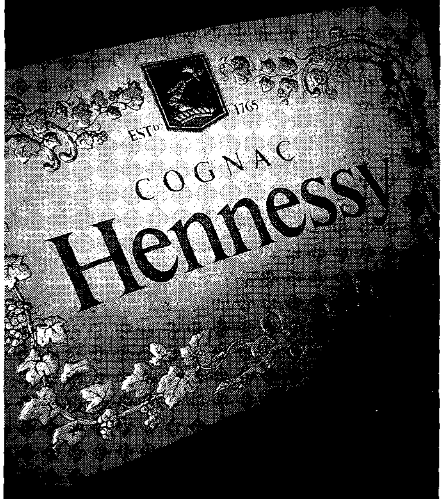

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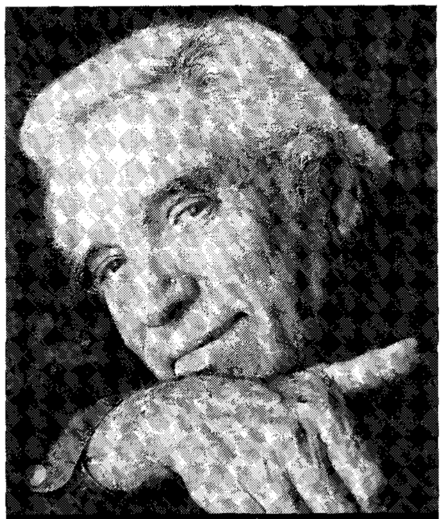

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Germont that were she to leave Alfredo he would follow her, he replies, with a mimed lecherous advance, that one way of breaking up the affair would be for her to have an affair with *him;* the reproving inflection she gives to her next words, "Embrace me as a *daughter*," lends a new—and quite inappropriate—twist to the touching phrase. (We may recall that Dumas fils, the author of "The Lady of the Camellias," was accused of sharing mistresses with Dumas père, but that has nothing to do with the characters of this drama; a performance of "La Traviata" is hardly the place for minor footnotes about its source material.) The setting for this act includes a bright-blue pool at the back, apparently an allusion to David Hockney's "Magic Flute" décor; its significance escaped me.

In the second-act finale Mr. Muni decides to remind us of how the opera is traditionally staged. On Flora's wall there hangs a Warhol-pastiche portrait of Maria Callas, the great postwar Violetta, and also a picture of a traditional horseshoe auditorium—perhaps La Fenice, where "La Traviata" had its first performance, perhaps La Scala, in which Callas sang the famous Visconti production. I gave it little more than a glance, for there was a great deal else to watch. On two television screens, the film of the opera with Anna Moffo and Gino Bechi was in progress, showing an alternative version of the scene before us. The final ensemble was comedy. Instead of flinging money at Violetta, Alfredo drew a gun on her and then—there are many pages of music to get through before the curtain falls—jerked around, pointing it at person after person as his or her voice joined the ensemble. At the close, he dragged Douphol out at pistol point. The third act was set in a hospital ward, where Violetta, saline-drip tube attached, lay dying. Alfredo, arriving with a small bunch of cheap flowers such as street venders sell, was so shocked by her appearance that before joining her he ran to a far corner of the ward to cry his phrase of ecstatic reunion ("Mia Violetta, oh gioia!," while in octaves she sings "Amato Alfredo, oh gioia"). The other beds were empty; Violetta had at least been permitted to sing "Addio del passato" as a soliloquy.

Sheryl Woods, the Violetta, is a vivid presence and a striking actress; she gave meaning to everything she sang. Martin Thompson, the Alfredo, was a bit of a stick. On the first night, there was a good deal of out-of-tune singing from both of them, and neither showed much command of Verdi style: of understanding how most affectingly to weight and time the musical phrases, how most eloquently to move from note to note. This was no doubt Mr. Muni's fault as much as theirs. It would be hard for a tenor to reconcile the words "The youthful ardor of my boiling spirits she tempered with her placid smile of love. . . . Forgetting the universe, I live as if in Heaven," and music that gives them rapt, excited expression, with relaxed after-tennis conversation over drinks. Gaetan La Perrière was a dull Germont who seemed to be thinking about his voice. I liked the unobtrusive efficiency of Jennifer Lane, the Annina (here "Violetta's secretary"); other minor characters—Flora, Gastone, d'Obigny—were played with bright cartoon-strip caricature. Guido Ajmone-Marsan's conducting was neither here nor there; he evidently knows how the score goes, but the rendering was unrefined. The tenor and baritone cabalettas were reinstated, which would make sense in a "historical" production attempting to present, blots and all, the opera that Verdi wrote—as a demonstration that he could produce a masterpiece even within the confines of convention. And would make sense if the singers sang the music so that we overlooked its triviality. But all the evidence suggests that Verdi soon after "La Traviata" countenanced cabaletta cutting, and later recommended it when he felt that his earlier cabalettas were mere capitulations to past convention. Violetta was allowed both strophes of "Ah fors'è lui" and of "Addio del passato," and that's another matter: musically there may be no addition beyond a straight repeat, but verbally there is, and Miss Woods was an artist who gave differing musical inflections, word-influenced, to the strophes.

One reaction to the production seemed to be "It's quite fun, isn't it? It's certainly something different," and on that level the show can be counted a success. But Mr. Muni, an intelligent and complicated thinker about opera, had aimed higher. Nearly fifty years ago, Ernest Newman wrote:

> The time is ripe for a new operatic treatment of the subject by some dramatist and musician of genius. The old conventional apparatus of the play and of the opera should be scrapped, and the theme treated on fresh lines. . . . Neither the imagination of the mid-nineteenth century nor the musical idiom and technical apparatus of the Italian opera of the period was equal to the task of limning so complex a character as Marie Duplessis [the real-life model for Violetta] in music. . . . The whole subject should be taken up and thought out afresh by some composer of the present day—if he can find the right librettist.

Yet the old opera, Newman also said, "is still very much alive." Of Violetta's cabaletta, "Sempre libera," he wrote, "Granted that in the operatic world of the 1850's it was in some such form as this that feminine frailty and frivolity had to find expression, the thing could not be better done: a century of familiarity with the aria has not robbed it of the smallest particle of life." Mr. Muni had thought out the subject afresh. Insofar as the staging was concerned, he had scrapped the old apparatus. But he retained the old words and the old music. "La Traviata" is composed in mid-nineteenth-century forms: Act I is prelude, introduzione (including the brindisi and the waltz-duet), aria-finale; Act II is aria, duet, aria, finale (with traditional largo concertato and stretta); Act III is aria, bacchanal (Verdi assigned a separate number to the little Mardi Gras chorus), duet, and finale. Again and again, there was a mismatch between the formal eloquence of the score, with its repetitions, closure formulas, and cadenzas, and what was happening onstage. And also between the high rhetoric of the characters' utterance ("A thousand serpents devour my bosom") and the new dramatic context in which they spoke. The mismatch raised interesting questions but hampered any simple, or even complicated, emotional response to the opera. As in the "Ariadne," Mr. Muni—this is the gravest charge—seemed to undervalue, at times even to misread, what the music of an opera tells us. Julian Budden in his chapter on "La Traviata" wrote, "Words describe an emotion; music conveys it directly." The new production gave us much to think about but not much to feel. There was too much commentary, elaboration. Directness was missing.

—ANDREW PORTER

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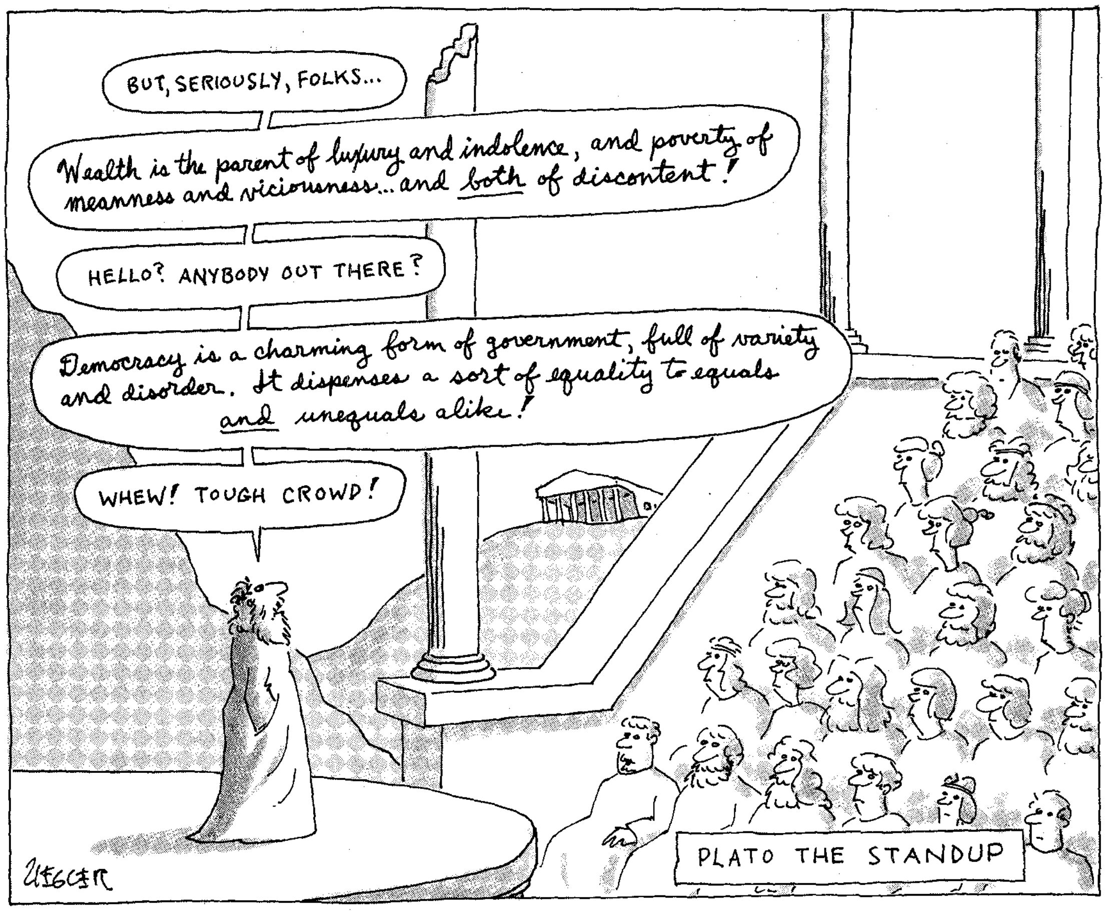
THE CURRENT CINEMA

Flatlands

"TRUST," the new movie by the young writer and director Hal Hartley, takes place entirely in a white, middle-class neighborhood of a forlorn-looking Long Island town. The kitchens and bedrooms and TV-dominated living rooms in which Hartley's characters spend most of their time have an odd anonymous quality, like spaceship cabins in a science-fiction movie. These rooms may be oppressive, even claustrophobic, but people huddle in them anyway, because what's outside seems worse: an atmosphere that's thin, inhospitable to life. The Long Island we see in "Trust" and in Hartley's previous film, "The Unbelievable Truth" (1990), is a bleak, featureless, neither-here-nor-there milieu. It's a place where anything can happen and almost nothing does—where parents and children, living together in tight quarters, torment and negotiate with each other just to create some drama for themselves. The landscape's as flat as a petri dish, and weird stuff grows in it: obsessions, stubborn neuroses, spectacular personality disorders, persistent low-grade anomie, and, very occasionally, some amazing bloom of imagination. Hartley's Long Island is a laboratory of identities, with all sorts of mutants and hybrids crowded together in insane profusion, and every now and then one of these fantastic creatures gets strong enough to attempt an escape. Perhaps only someone who grew up on Long Island, as Hartley did, would dare to present its middle-class culture as a kind of (wholly inadvertent) experiment in freedom. He seems to know that these drab, rootless suburban small towns can force people to define themselves—to invent themselves from scratch, if need be. In this sort of environment, any sense of what you're doing and why you're doing it—even if the action is destructive and the reasons are provisional—constitutes a moral triumph. Hartley's movies don't say that explicitly. They don't have to; their confident, fiercely original style is all the proof we need that it's possible to make something out of next to nothing—to create a self out of the suburban vacuum.

Like most truly distinctive styles, Hartley's is an amalgam of borrowed ideas. A given scene in "Trust" may remind you simultaneously of, say, early Godard, Robert Frank, a TV sitcom, and the no-budget horror classic "Carnival of Souls," and yet seem like nothing you've ever seen before, because of the sheer improbability of the combination. Hartley mixes his disparate influences in an unmistakably personal way: no one else could have precisely this collection of stray notions in his head. Hartley's style is at once self-conscious and bizarrely innocent—allusive but never academic. And the heroes and heroines of his pictures are invariably young people who share his idiosyncratic approach to culture. Both "The Unbelievable Truth" and "Trust" are romantic comedies in which the lovers are passionate autodidacts: guys who have acquired specialized technical knowledge, random bits of philosophy, and impressive vocabularies while doing time in prison or reform school; and teen-age girls who don't like school but read constantly, in their bedrooms and on the street, greedy for something they can use to help them make sense of their lives. In Hartley's world, these moody ex-cons and earnest high-school girls are the only really interesting people around, because they're relatively unformed. They haven't settled into their personalities, like everyone else—the bitter housewives, the exhausted clock-punchers, the weaselly strivers. Their identities are still works in progress.

The hero of "Trust," a thirtyish electronics whiz named Matthew (Martin Donovan), is a rumpled, chain-smoking depressive who lives with his widowed father (John MacKay). Matthew has the look of someone who doesn't care about anything; his job, at


BUT, SERIOUSLY, FOLKS...
Wealth is the parent of luxury and indolence, and poverty of meanness and viciousness... and both of discontent!
HELLO? ANYBODY OUT THERE?
Democracy is a charming form of government, full of variety and disorder. It dispenses a sort of equality to equals and unequals alike!
WHEW! TOUGH CROWD!
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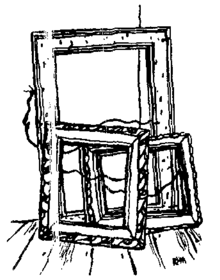
PLATO THE STANDUP

a plant that assembles low-quality computers, and his father, a macho domestic tyrant, keep him beaten down and dispirited. But there's an edge to his despair—traces of anger and humor, indicating that he hasn't yet been totally numbed by circumstances. In the refuge of his bedroom, he reads books on theoretical physics and fondles a hand grenade (a war souvenir of his father's), which, if the time came, could send him out of this life in a suitably sensational and ironic style. The movie's heroine, Maria (Adrienne Shelly, who was also the star of "The Unbelievable Truth"), looks at first like a typical Long Island teen-ager, and at first that's exactly what she is. She's a cartoon adolescent bimbo, strutting down the high-school corridors in garish make-up, high heels, and a neon-orange mini. Her boyfriend (Gary Sauer), the quarterback of the school's football team, has made her pregnant, and on the day she breaks the news to everyone she begins to realize that the persona she's adopted isn't going to be much use to her in this situation. Her father calls her a tramp; she yells back at him and then slaps him, and as she walks out the door he collapses, dead of a coronary. (Maria doesn't learn of his death until later in her very bad day.) The quarterback, who's a self-infatuated hot shot with dreams of major-college stardom and an N.F.L. contract, doesn't respond much more satisfyingly. He makes it clear that marriage to Maria isn't part of his career plan, and to drive the point home he tells her how he imagines her after childbirth: as a slovenly housewife, spending her days with one eye on the brat and the other on the tube. (She wouldn't, he thinks, be a stimulating enough mate for an ace like him.) This cruel vision shakes Maria up, and by the time she meets Matthew, a few hours later, she's had some further jolts. Her mother (Merrit Nelson), who holds Maria responsible for her father's death, has kicked her out of the house; a convenience-store clerk has tried to rape her; she has witnessed the abduction of a baby. These dire events mount up with preposterous speed, and Maria bounces from one to another like a pinball. When Matthew comes upon her, sprawled in an abandoned building with a spent six-pack of beer at her side, she looks like a young woman who's ready to change her life in a big, big way.



Maria has hit bottom fast; Hartley's accelerated exposition contrives to give her a lifetime of traumatic experience in about half a day. Having opened the movie with a tight closeup of Maria's face, set in the rock-hard attitude of someone who knows just how she wants to present herself to the world, Hartley spends the next half hour or so dismantling her, blowing that initial image (which is also her self-image) to bits. These early passages, which intercut the adventures of the heroine and scenes of Matthew's slightly more mundane troubles at work and at home, require some patience of the audience: the tone wobbles, the minor characters' heartlessness seems overscaled, and we're afraid that the movie is going to consist entirely of semi-satiric humiliation scenes. But when Maria and Matthew find each other and begin to develop their losers' alliance—part romance, part tutorial, and part vaudeville act—the picture becomes fascinating. The story moves by surprising leaps (not all of them forward), with the rhythm of the main characters' erratic, uncertain progress toward an awareness of possibilities beyond their limited, cramped Long Island experience. "Trust" draws its narrative energy from their unpredictability. They're building themselves up from the flattest, lowest point imaginable, with unpromising materials, and on spongy ground. They have to do a lot of improvising.

To Hartley's credit, the story never turns inspirational. It never even comes close, because, although the movie respects its characters' impulse to make something better of their lives than what they've been offered, it doesn't define that something in any concrete way. There's no specific goal that they're trying to reach, no job, no relationship, no dream home for them to aspire to—nothing in sight, anyway. Hartley sets Maria and Matthew down in a world of negative possibilities—stifling families, soul-destroying workplaces, dreary tract houses—and watches while his young lovers try to figure out if there's anything in this environment that's worth salvaging. He's alert to the absurdities of their situation; he keeps

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the movie's tone dry, and makes the threatening, pervasive nothingness of the milieu grotesquely funny. Mostly, "Trust" plays as a series of twisted skits in which defenders of the Long Island way of life, like Maria's mother and Matthew's father, try to bully and manipulate their kids into being more like them. The parents and the children seem to be inhabiting different universes—they're rarely even in the same frame—and the disparity between the generations' world views becomes ludicrously, comically extreme. In this picture, ordinary domestic strife takes on a heightened, mock-epic quality.

Hal Hartley's manner in "Trust" is a risky blend of formal abstraction and dramatic realism, and it demands subtle, resourceful actors. Some of the supporting players here aren't quite equal to the challenge; they produce a few awkward, puzzling moments. But his stars are remarkable. Martin Donovan gives Matthew a gangling, dishevelled charm. He shambles about like a junior Rodney Dangerfield and yet manages to be an attractive, romantic presence. He has a nice casual air about him—a wonderful nihilistic insouciance—when he knocks people off barstools or puts a co-worker's head in a vise, and his bummed-out line readings are superbly timed. Adrienne Shelly brings off Maria's transformation from teen-age temptress to serious young woman with extraordinary ease. Shelly has changeable, childlike features: she has the ability to look either intelligent or utterly vacant, either fragile or wiry-tough. It's difficult to imagine another young actress who could make this character's rapid about-face seem so natural. Under Hartley's direction, Shelly and Donovan invent an acting style for a genre that appears to have materialized out of nowhere. "Trust" is, of all things, an existentialist comedy of manners. It comes from the nowhere that its maker grew up in.

—TERRENCE RAFFERTY

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THE LEGAL LIFE

[*From EQB Monitor, published by the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board*]

PROJECT TITLE: BAER BROTHERS POULTRY FACILITY EXPANSION

Description: The proposed project is the expansion of an existing poultry feedlot on sites roughly seven miles southeast of Hawley. The expansion will involve the construction of one barn that will house 100,000 pullets and three barns that will each house 100,000 lawyers.

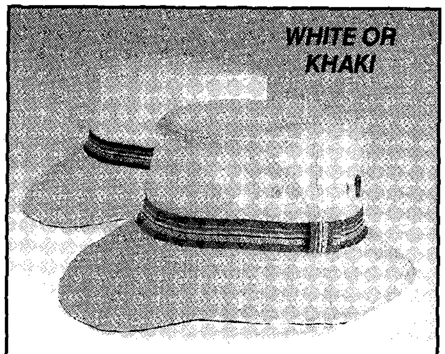
BOOKS

Travelling

ALEXANDER FRATER'S "Chasing the Monsoon" (Knopf; $2) is the story of a man in love with rain. "The first sounds I ever heard were those of falling rain," the author announces in a prologue, and he explains that he was born at the height of a tropical storm on a small, hurricane-ridden Southwest Pacific island. Frater's father and grandfather were Scottish missionary-doctors. (His grandfather had a Pacific island of his own, with the Firbankian name of Paama.) Frater's father was also an amateur meteorologist; the hobby, Frater gently suggests, allowed him to justify to his Presbyterian conscience a slightly unhinged passion for tropical storms. Above his son's bed he hung a picture: "a framed, luridly tinted Edwardian print of a deluge inundating a range of steep grassy hills." Frater goes on to say, "Temples along the crests indicated that the landscape was oriental. In small forests lower down, tigers and naked pygmies with spears could be discerned. In some, the tigers were avoiding the pygmies; in others the pygmies ran from the tigers. What made it remarkable, though, was the weight and density of the rain. Water fell torrentially from low, scudding clouds, and sprang from the hillsides in countless foaming cataracts. Flapping sheets of water hung spinnaker-like in the air, more went surfing down the slopes." A "flowing intaglio caption" identified this joyous scene as "Cherrapunji, Assam: The Wettest Place on Earth." Cherrapunji, Frater learned from his father, was a town, in what is now northwest India, where the great Indian monsoon reached its climax every summer. He recalls, "My father often spoke of going to Cherrapunji. . . .He likened it to one of the Stations of the Cross and implied that a visit at the height of the monsoon, with his rain gauge, would be a kind of pilgrimage."

Both father and son were expelled from their island by the Second World War. Frater was educated in Australia, emigrated to England, and eventually became the chief travel correspondent of the London *Observer;* this is his third expeditionary book. He explains that in 1986 he discovered that a lifetime's bumping and rattling on the back roads of the old Empire had worsened a congenital condition known as an Arnold-Chiari malformation—a depending tonsil of his brain had begun to touch the top of his spine. A London doctor warned him that one more bad thump might leave him wheelchair-bound for life, and Frater decided to give up travelling. One day, however, in the waiting room of the National Hospital for Nervous Diseases, in London, he chances (with what the reader may feel is either proper fairy-tale necessity or suspicious convenience) on a feckless, wealthy Indian couple, the Baptistas, who tell him that they, too, are rain lovers, and that they celebrate the arrival of the monsoon each year by throwing a "big monsoon thrash in lovely wet Goa." Listening to Mr. Baptista praise the monsoon, Frater recalls the "curious state of grace the rains always seemed to bestow." The magic name of Cherrapunji comes up, and Frater decides, hair-trigger spine and all, to go there at the end of May, just before the monsoon season begins. (Although nothing much happens to Frater's brain tonsil, the reader's knowledge that the right jolt on a wet road could send the narrator back to London on a stretcher lends the book a piquant urgency throughout, as though Frater were making the trip with a grenade in his pocket.)

The dual premise of his enterprise—a pilgrimage impelled equally by filial piety and by a longing for the far pavilions of the Empire—may seem to the American reader to threaten a familiar excursion into the damper, more whimsical reaches of English self-approval. But Frater's narration is



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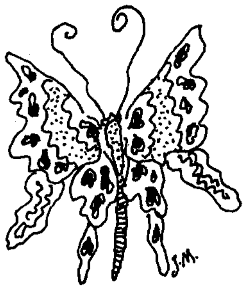
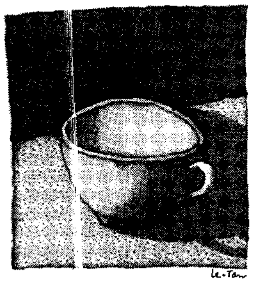
buoyant and attentive, and is saved from conventional emotion by the comic fervor with which he romanticizes his India, and also by his engaging, slightly maniacal insistence on connecting all his experiences to his ruling passion for rain. Frater presents himself not as a shrewd-eyed and masterly explorer but as a fringe Englishman, eccentric and even a little addled—an English traveller in the tradition of Edward Lear. In place of the hardened, ironic, notebook-bound chronicling of a Raban or a Theroux he offers an account at once ingenuous and severely concentrated: everything bends toward the monsoon. In his book, the journalistic conventions of travel writing—the descriptions of the surroundings and of the chance encounters of the voyager—are merely incidental annoyances, brushed aside by the author as he pursues his peculiar goal. Frater's mock-epic method, however, permits a bracing freedom of observation: what he sees out of the corner of his eye has a vividness that a more responsibly centered gaze might not have achieved. And the charm of his book does not belie its serious point: that we are always predisposed to treat natural happenstance as purposeful providence, and that even rain is shaped by our imaginations to fit the heads of those on whom it falls. Frater also traces the path of his reluctant moral education. By the end of the book, he has come to see that the monsoon of his memory and desire—the tinted Edwardian image symbolic of renewal and paradise—is, in its way, an unworthy fantasy: the monsoon (as any reader of the papers these days recognizes) is what we call a natural disaster, and usually falls only to underline an already existing despair.



Many American readers may have thought that the Indian rainy season is a lot of rain spread out over a season. Actually, Frater says, "the monsoon" refers to two specific storm systems, both of which traditionally arrive, with magical predictability, almost simultaneously each June on the east and west sides of the Indian peninsula; as he puts it, "India is embraced by these two great wet arms." When the weather warms up on the subcontinent in the first week of June, the western storm makes a landfall at Trivandrum, a town on Cape Comorin; travels swiftly up the coast toward Goa, usually arriving in Bombay by the second week of June; and then disperses, with part of the system making a gentle left turn into Pakistan and the rest floating across southern Asia. The eastern storm, which is more violent, usually pushes into Bangladesh from the Bay of Bengal and then wheels west across northern India from Calcutta to Delhi, and there the two monsoons eventually merge. (Cherrapunji, if poetry were all, ought to be the place where the two arms meet; it is, instead, the spot where, because of a microclimatic curiosity, the eastern storm is most intense.) Frater begins his journey by tracking the western monsoon as it arrives in Trivandrum, and follows it north to Bombay; he visits Delhi and then flies across India to Calcutta, in order to watch the eastern storm as it closes in on Cherrapunji. Much of his time in the latter swing is spent waiting for a visa to visit Cherrapunji, which is the site of continuing violence, particularly between Indian nationals and illegal immigrant Bangladeshis, and has been off limits to most Western travellers for the last few years.

The first half of the book is set mostly in the relatively wealthy resort towns of Trivandrum and Goa. Frater visits a weather station, where he talks to fussy and immensely self-important meteorologists, and collects monsoon theory and lore. He spends his evenings with well-off Indians, including the Baptistas. His Indians often speak in Peter Sellers cadences ("I am knowing your vernacular from several Church of England chaps who were out here sinking wells"), but Frater records their confident, old-fashioned periods almost enviously. At the Meteorological Centre at Trivandrum, he reports, the mood was like "that in a theatre before the curtain went up on an important first night." One meteorologist finally announces to him, "Look, look, monsoon is *coming!* Everyone is going around saying it is late but it will be here Wednesday, Thursday latest. This will be confirm by satellite picture coming through at 1:15 today. Speak to my expert, Mr. Julius Joseph. But not now. Come back this afternoon. We are all frantic at the moment." A minute later, another meteorologist becomes poetic about the monsoon, and is entirely convincing in his easy mixture of humor and national pride. "The difference between our weather and the weather in Europe is the difference between the poor man and the millionaire," he says. "European weather is the poor fellow. His habits are predictable, his movements restricted. Each day he will follow the same routine, taking morning coffee in the same restaurant. . . . Indian weather, though, is extreme, wilful, fast-moving and wholly unpredictable."



The climax of this first, happy part of the book is achieved in a wonderful scene in which Frater, following the monsoon's course up the coast, in Cochin watches as the Indian Spices Board—a hard-headed collection of merchants—meets the rain:

> Heaving a door open I stepped outside. Soaked to the skin within seconds I felt a wonderful sense of flooding warmth and invigoration; it was, indubitably, a little bit like being born again. Raindrops rang like coins on the flagstoned path and the air was filled with fusillades of crimson flowers from the flamboyant trees. . . . Orange tiles cladding the gazebo's steeply pitched roof began to tremble until, like clay pigeons being sprung, they went whirling off into the murk one by one.
>
> Then, from the corner of an eye still watering from the flower strike, I witnessed an astonishing scene. Two straining waiters held the coffee-shop door open while a party of men and women filed into the storm. The men wore button-down shirts and smart business suits, the women best-quality silk saris and high-heeled shoes; as they emerged, they opened their arms and lifted their faces to the rain.
>
> The Spices Board had come out to greet the monsoon.
>
> They made for the jetty, strolling, laughing out loud, calling, revolving slowly in a kind of dreamlike gavotte. In the gazebo they stood knee-deep in seething water while the wind blew spiralling flumes of rain up over the peak of the disintegrating roof; the flumes united there in a fountainhead which, along with the tiles, kept getting snatched away. Buffeted by the gusts, unbalanced by the waves, the Spices Board executives clung to each other with water in their eyes and looks of sublime happiness on their faces. A young woman in a soaked and flapping gold-colored sari laughed at me and clapped her hands. "Paradise will be like this!" she shouted.

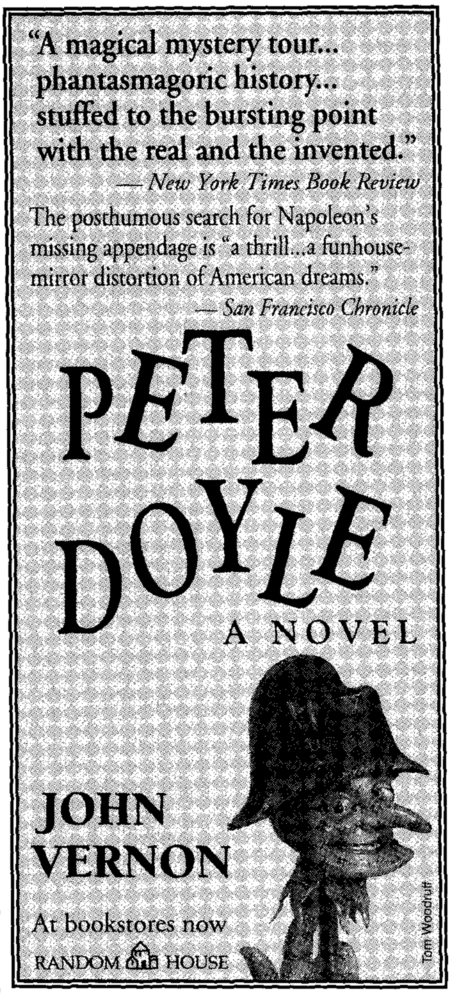
Throughout his book Frater counterpoints the different significance of rain for the Indian and the Western imaginations. His father's and grandfather's fascination with rain, he recalls, always had a morbid edge of dread—a storm was inevitably a smaller Deluge. His grandfather, he explains, was so taken with the scale and terror of tropical storms that he became convinced that Paama had been the site of the original flood. "What I have in mind," his grandfather told him, "is God setting the black handkerchief on his head and handing down Rain as Punishment."

In Frater's guiltless India, however, rain is seen mostly as life-enhancing. "The monsoon is a terrifically sexy time," the Baptistas tell Frater at the outset, and although the only direct temptation that he reports is that of a Bengali pimp who promises him that his girls are "Water Nymphs [who] have university degrees," the Indian sense that rain drowns sin by increasing appetite nonetheless has a happy effect on the author and the reader, too; the rain lubricates everything it touches.

The pivotal point of Frater's book takes place in an eighteenth-century maharaja's "monsoon pavilion" a hundred-odd miles outside Delhi. A monument in the history of architectural delirium, the pavilion was constructed so that the maharaja and his court and his mistresses could experience the joys of the rain even in a dry season:

> Five Mogul arches on a raised marble platform supported the flat roof, its water tanks disguised by ornamental friezes, the open concourse below containing groups of lounging people. Four broad stone channels ran towards the central arches, each studded with lotus-shaped iron fountains. . . . There were 3,000 fountains, installed by master plumbers held in such high esteem by the maharaja that he also consulted them on philosophical and military matters.

The increasing water pressure on the roof also caused huge stone boulders to tremble, and produce mimic thunder on metal sheets. Frater lies down to sleep in the pavilion, only to be awakened by his self-appointed "guide," who lives in the morgue of the maharaja's abandoned palace nearby. The guide's most precious possession is a portable radio. "BBC World Service is my lifeline," he says. He dreams of going to London to produce radio programs, and he wakens Frater from



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his nap by playing a Gielgud broadcast of "The Lady of Shalott" in the author's ear. Something in this small moment—the sudden recognition, perhaps, of the absurdity of longing too intensely for a foreign culture that one really knows only through scraps of poetry and lore, and through imaginative self-projection—repels Frater, and he decides, "This place had nothing to do with me. It was a preposterous folly erected by some showman who would today have been running theme parks."

From then on, a more chastened tone dominates the story. In Calcutta, Frater meets the impressive Communist mayor of the city, Kamal Kumar Basu, who brusquely attempts to dispel his illusions about the monsoon:

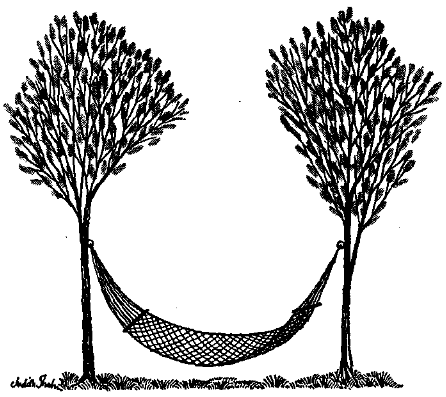
> They [the British] built Calcutta as a great colonial capital, the second city of the Empire after London. Lord Curzon called it a European city set down upon Asiatic soil and that is really the heart of the problem. They built it for themselves, fine public edifices, cathedrals, churches, pleasant suburbs. They gave no thought to the millions of Indians who also lived there; no proper infrastructure was provided and, even then, it was notorious for its squalor and deprivation. . . . When the monsoon arrives our antiquated system cannot cope. Their lives become a torment of misery.

The final scene, in Cherrapunji (Frater gets a visa by deftly manipulating the bureaucracy), is nicely and convincingly anticlimactic. Frater goes to the Cherrapunji market in order to complete his pilgrimage by buying an umbrella—something he has denied himself throughout his trip. With the enduring fatuousness of the Imperial English visitor, he takes it for granted that he will be welcomed. But he finds himself surrounded by a hostile and suspicious crowd, and the owner of the umbrella stand at first refuses to sell him an umbrella and then offers him only a derisory, inadequate nineteenth-century parasol. It slowly dawns on Frater, as it does on the reader, that to the immigrant-besieged people of Cherrapunji Frater is just another wog.

Frater's achievement is to counterweight his dream India with a harsher one without undercutting the seductiveness of the dream. Still, what the reader is likely to bring away from the book is chiefly the memory of those early scenes in Goa and Trivandrum. Frater's wet, verdant India, the reader may come to feel, is in many ways an improved England: still cozy and eccentric and literary, but moister and more libidinal.

The much discussed contemporary renaissance in travel literature has been achieved mostly through such retrospective trips as Frater's. No one has yet invented a set of modern literary properties to correspond to the surfaces of modern travel as they really are: no one has romanticized the snug plastic corridors and Perspex windows and miniaturized comforts of the airport and the plane. What we are offered instead are revisits and reappraisals, nostalgic or complaining or glorifying or elegiac—nineteenth-century routes retraversed by twentieth-century travellers. Perhaps as a consequence, the genre has become the last repository of the kind of sharp caricatural sketch that distinguished English fiction from Fielding and Smollett through Dickens. The keenness of perception that the nineteenth-century novelist could maintain for volume after volume—the Dickensian sense of a whole civilization seen, in all its luridly tinted clarity, for the first time—is permissible now, it seems, only in our accounts of other places. The branch of this tradition which Frater draws on is perhaps a secondary one. His writing seems to descend from the *Punch* humorists—from Jerome K. Jerome and George Grossmith—and that may account, in part, for the book's lovely, evocative turn-of-the-century tone. Frater gives all his characters, Englishmen and Indians alike, some of the slightly off-putting diminutiveness but also some of the bright, memorable coloring and hard-edged shapeliness of Edwardian toy animals, waiting to enter their ark.

IF India to the travelling Englishman is another England, China to the travelling American is an idealized antipode. Fergus M. Bordewich suggests in his book "Cathay: A Journey in Search of Old China" (Prentice Hall; $19.95) that certain elements of our imaginary picture of Chinese culture—an extreme politeness, a secretiveness, a dignified reserve—appeal to us as the opposite of our own shrieking and overintimate manners. Bordewich's book is meticulous, tightly written, and often affecting and full of melancholy beauty, but it is also foggy on detail, lacking in narrative push, and, in spots, just difficult to follow. Even the journalistic basics of the book—the exact where and when of it—are left at times maddeningly vague. Nowhere on the jacket, or even in the main body of the text, is it made entirely plain, for instance, that his journey took place during the winter before the Tiananmen Square uprising and massacre; the reader has to dig this information out of an author's note.



Bordewich's ambition is not to set down what China was like in the few months of his journey but to search for what remains in modern China of "Cathay"—the medieval European traveller's name for the Middle Kingdom. Bordewich, a New York-born free-lance writer who lists among his earlier occupations work as a roustabout in the Alaskan oil fields, as a seaman, and as a taxicab driver, and who, on the evidence of the conversations reported in this book, speaks at least one of the Chinese languages—exactly which is left unclear—had, he explains in a prologue, visited China once before, in the early eighties, as an "adviser" to a Chinese press service. But his heart is given over to the China of traditional poetry and theatre, and his Cathay is a composite of old screen paintings, Western chinoiserie, Shen Fu's "Six Records of a Floating Life," and bits of Taoist poetry. It is an imaginary civilization, in which diametrically opposed tastes—the atheistic practicality of Confucianism and the rhapsodic irrationality of Tao, for instance—are spiced to please a Western palate.

Bordewich has no illusions about his illusion; he knows that his is a made-up China, and one that, to the degree that it existed at all, was probably as repellent as it was seductive. But he also suggests that within the dream image lies a trace of truth about a culture that is in the process of being exterminated:

> I recognized a danger in all this. Cathay might be merely a China of the mind, as real as a chinoiserie print or a willowware plate. Old China was also a cruel land, whose dwellers bartered their children for food, deliberately crippled women's feet to please the eye of connoisseurs, and endured a conformity so tacit that a man might be arrested for wearing odd-colored clothes. . . . Nevertheless, I felt that something crucial had been lost, or at least hidden, deliberately obscured. Like any denial of the past or of reality, it had bred sickness and depression.

Bordewich is an autodidact bewitched by an image of old China, rather than a practicing sinologist. This is his strength: it gives the short biographies of Chinese scholars and painters which fill his book an edge of real feeling and admiration. To him, figures like Ni Zan, a kind of fourteenth-century Chinese de Kooning (when he was criticized once for his lack of realism, he said, "Ah, but total lack of resemblance is hard to achieve"), the ruins of whose garden he visits, are possible models for life. Bordewich is drawn, above all, to the Chinese traditions of retreat and escape; he loves the small walled gardens, in which he finds "museums not just of a half-forgotten art but of a sensibility, a whole way of seeing the world."

Bordewich's account of his trip is, inevitably, a chronicle of fleeting glimpses and rudely deflated hopes. As he visits his shrines and holy mountains, he is at least as offended by the intrusions of American mass culture into "Cathay" as he is by the Chinese government's totalitarian control over other Chinese. In Chengdu, for instance, he goes to hear a Chinese opera performed by an amateur company, and finds that "their voices sculpted a world of miraculous grace." But Michael Jackson's "Bad" resonates from a dance hall behind the theatre, and Bordewich remarks that "ironically, it was the recent liberalization of culture that threatened to administer the coup de grace" to traditional opera—that "the opera now had to compete with film and television, and the unpredictable cornucopia of Western culture."

Later, Bordewich goes to the holy mountain of Taishan, which, he says, existed before the revolution in "an eternal midsummer's eve, where a wisp of cloud might be an immortal in flight, a butterfly, a sage's dream." Late at night, he makes his way to the edge of the cliff of Taishan, and dreams beneath a monumental inscription left behind by an eighth-century emperor. He wakes, though, to find that "Chinese tourists had arrived by the hundreds in the night":

> They continued to come, a migration of troglodytes. . . . I was geared up for epiphany. In earlier times, rapturous pilgrims hurled themselves into the newborn day from here, convinced they were becoming one with the boiling void of the Tao. But the sunrise was anticlimactic. When the light finally came it was without drama, oozing lethargically through a gray soup of smog and haze. There was no sea of clouds, no red sun, no apocalyptic vision. But the holiday makers yelped and howled anyway and erupted in a frenzy of picture taking. Someone turned on a radio and a pinging Cantonese voice shrilled, "Why don't you fall in love with me? If you love me, tell me now, now, now!"

Bordewich's hypersensitivity and his lack of common sense about what happens to overvenerated sites in any culture make the reader resist, just a little, his larger complaints about the purposeful Communist destruction of much of old China. His fretfulness is a shame, because a great deal of what he has to report on this front is still truly shocking. The destruction of the continuities of a culture as ancient as China's is criminal. (Bordewich points out that a largely unchanging meritocratic-exam system functioned in China from the first century B.C. until 1912, as if the S.A.T. and the G.R.E. had been administered continuously in this country for two thousand years.) Bordewich emphasizes that, although a vengeful hostility to traditional Chinese culture had been a mainstay of Communist ideology from the beginning, the worst destruction of temples and palaces and holy sites took place in the nightmare years of the Cultural Revolution. He hears heart-wrenching stories of the reign of the Red Guards, and of their wanton, pointless fever to destroy old China and torture and humiliate its keepers. Here, for example, is his account of the Red Guards' visit in 1968 to the Temple of Confucius at Qufu:

> They scoured the tablets of Confucius, of the sage's parents, of the four great disciples, and of the seventy-two sages from their crimson altars, and, like so much kindling, burned them to cinders. Then they hitched a truck to the bronze images of Confucius and his disciples . . . and dragged them in a procession through the streets. . . . Then they smashed the statues to pieces with sledgehammers. Kong Fanyin saved the mansion and the clan archives by arguing that they should be pre-

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> served as "evidence" of the "criminal atrocities" the Kongs had committed. The Red Guards publicly tortured him anyway on the Drum Tower at the center of town. Later, they marched to the clan cemetery, where every Kong for the last twenty-five centuries has been buried. There they looted the tombs and threw the shriveled corpses of the sage's descendants on the ground.

Bordewich feels (perhaps too optimistically) that Maoist rule has by now been so thoroughly discredited that the earlier, equally tradition-rending, though nonviolent, Republican revolution of Sun Yat-sen may turn out to have been the "real" revolution in China. In any case, the reader, appalled by the relentless horror stories, is a little surprised to discover how much of old China remains, and may feel that Bordewich's book contains two different complaints, difficult to harmonize. He complains first that the Communists have taught the Chinese to despise their own traditional high civilization, and then that the sites of traditional Chinese civilization are in any case impossible to appreciate, because they are so overrun with contemporary Chinese.

In the end, the closest that Bordewich comes to his Cathay is a landscape of mist—an obscuring fog that descends as he is visiting a once sacred site:

> There was a fine drizzle now, all across the lake. Gradually the mist thickened, sapping the last color from the landscape. It sifted over the emerald islets, crept in waves past the teahouse's glass walls. There were two or three other people in the teahouse, and the giggly waitress, and Pan, but I felt utterly, blissfully adrift in a watery universe. Time and space seemed to disintegrate.
>
> The modern city was a pale gray shadow to the east. In that wonderful mist anything at all seemed possible. For a brief moment (I don't know how long it really lasted) I had an intense sensation that the old city still existed there, a mile from where I sat; it seemed simply self-evident that I could climb into a boat and go there, to the foot of the great whitewashed battlements, to walk among the ladies with their head ornaments in the shape of phoenixes and flowers, and the whores who beckoned from crimson arcades, past shops that sold the best Fujianese jasmine and rhino skins from Bengal, to dine on Mother Sung's choice fish soup. . . . I finally stood next to my friend the sage, whom I had known for years in his silent painting, staring into the void that contained, like the eternal Tao, all that had been, and everything that was yet to be.

Although China, unlike India, is a traditionally "puritanical" culture, there has been, it seems, a slight increase in sexual license there; the book includes brief descriptions of young Chinese couples making out in the ruins of the sacred sites. Given Bordewich's temperament, it is perhaps no surprise that he finds this omnipresent evidence of sexual appetite in "Cathay" depressing rather than stimulating. But at one point in the book there is a heartening comic description of two lovers on a bench in an old garden, frantically grappling with each other's shapeless, quilted winter clothes. And when, toward the end, Bordewich goes to visit an Imperial pleasure garden in Beijing, he finds, to his disappointment, that "red pumps, sneakers, bobby socks, and blue cuffs poked out from every bush." He says, "Everywhere I stepped I was surrounded by whimpers and murmurs and sighs. The boys and girls clutched at each other under the shrubs, nuzzling in each other's arms like puppies. The entire hillside was alive and pulsating with repressed sexuality and lust. I felt that if I stumbled against anyone he would shriek or explode." The reader may feel that the author has been left uninstructed by his own experience. What is he seeing on that hill, after all, but modern Chinese attempting, in perhaps the only way now available to them, to retreat into walled gardens of their own?

Descendant of a Great Man

IT requires no great sensitivity to the inner lives of texts to see that Bordewich's mysterious China, like Frater's idyllic India, is an exotic metaphor rather than a place on a map—a Western invention, whose real subject is ourselves. One of the things that may seem odd about the renaissance in travel writing is that it has occurred at a time when orthodox academic criticism has turned on the whole enterprise of travel. In the current critical dispensation, Frater's and Bordewich's "projects," like those of many of their contemporaries, from Chatwin to Theroux, would probably be judged equally tendentious. Two imposing, worthwhile recent academic surveys of the history of travel and its literature, Dennis Porter's "Haunted Journeys: Desire and Transgression in European Travel Writing" (Princeton; $35) and Eric J. Leed's "The Mind of the Traveler: From Gilgamesh to Global Tourism" (Basic Books; $24.95), go as far as to suggest that the only decent journeys are penitential ones, and that, as Porter ringingly puts it, we might "all be better off if the great majority of the world's travel books had never been written." Since all our attempts to know "the other" merely return us to the trap of our own selves, the best idea is just to stay where we are.

And write about what? All that exists outside us is, to one degree or another, mysterious; the alternative to a tendentious literature would seem to be no literature at all. Here, as so often, contemporary academic literary criticism seems to treat the manifest point of many of our books as though it were latent and only dimly perceptible. That we go elsewhere in search of images we already possess and shape others in a form we have always known is not a coded message surreptitiously concealed within Western literature but one of its explicit wisdoms—what used to be called "a theme." Good travel writing continues to offer, with some of the easy credibility of journalism, a truth that can be found as well on the paths outside Combray or, for that matter, on the Yellow Brick Road: that we travel elsewhere to find ourselves, and that all journeys are journeys home.

—ADAM GOPNIK

BRIEFLY NOTED

FICTION

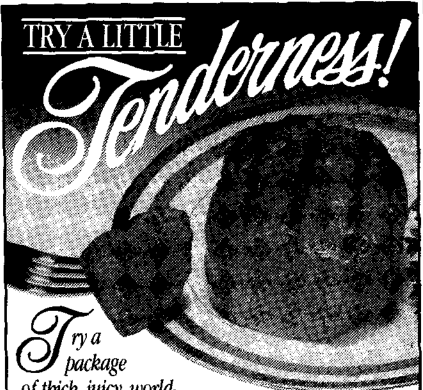
THE GREAT WORLD, by David Malouf (Pantheon; $22). Nothing can contain "the sheer size of the world" except your head, which is 'the same shape as the world, and really was the world, only on an infinitely small scale." This is the paradox of a narrative that concentrates on the lives of two men who meet fighting for Australia in the Second World War. Both men enlisted as a way of escaping home and getting into the world; they wind up nursing each other through bouts of malaria and gangrene, as prisoners of the Japanese. Vic, an adopted orphan of somewhat dubious character, remains in the world afterward, apparently going from strength to strength as a millionaire businessman, but with a need for the approval and witness of Digger, while Digger has retreated to the obscure family homestead to live with his retarded sister, who hates and is suspicious of Vic. We sometimes look at the world from her head, or Digger's mother's, or from the head of Vic's adoptive sister and eventual wife. The more serious novel that doesn't condescend to its characters, this book has a limpidity and an elliptical sense of time that save it from becoming a blockbuster-style epic—despite having some of that form's easy pleasures—and render it poetic.

THE BOOK OF SAINTS, by Nino Ricci (Knopf; $19). Like the tiny Italian village where it takes place, this lithe first novel feels modern and medieval at the same time. In 1960, electric light has yet to come to Valle del Sole, and boys still tend sheep in the afternoon, but many men have left to seek their fortune in America; seven-year-old Vittorio Innocente knows his father only through the monthly letters that his mother reads privately and then burns in the fireplace. When she is bitten by a snake in the stable, the other villagers whisper that a curse has fallen on the Innocente family, and their superstition is borne out when her belly begins to swell. Vittorio gradually pieces together the relationship between the stranger he saw leaving the stable in haste on that ill-starred afternoon, his mother's volatile condition, and his grandfather's embittered resignation from his position as *lu podestà*, the village mayor. The author manages to avoid the pitfalls of child's-eye fiction: Vittorio is neither cutely naïve nor wise beyond his years. And though this tale of family shame is as old as the hills, Mr. Ricci doesn't settle for a stock outcome, and leaves us in the midst of a chaotic voyage to America that is as much the beginning of Vittorio's story as the end of it.

GENERAL

TERRORISM AND DEMOCRACY, by Stansfield Turner (Houghton Mifflin; $22.95). An exceptionally intelligent analysis of an appallingly complicated subject. The director of the Central Intelligence Agency under President Carter brings philosophical breadth as well as firsthand experience to his examination of the alternatives available to a country, like ours, committed to ethical norms—such as not killing innocent people—when confronting enemies who are not committed to those norms. In the past, Turner finds, we have usually made concessions, and he goes on to discuss terrorist episodes under Presidents Johnson, Nixon, and Ford before settling down to recount, in intimate detail that makes a fascinating if disturbing narrative, how Washington gradually realized that we had pitifully few options if we wanted to rescue the Americans held hostage in Teheran. The author is charitable in scrutinizing the Reagan Administration's record; while he finds its performance poor, he sympathizes with the frustration that led to blunders. Always informative, Turner demonstrates an uncommon virtue: he is wonderfully free of self-justification.

CHARLES DARWIN: A NEW LIFE, by John Bowlby (Norton; $24.95). This biography portrays Darwin as a scientist who combined diligence in factual observation with an audacious theoretical imagination. How-



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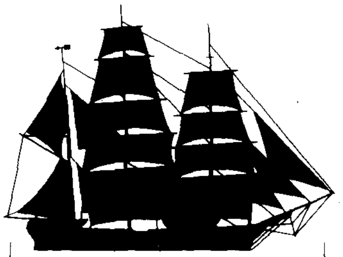

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ever, the author is really more interested in Darwin as a neurotic invalid, whose symptoms were psychogenic; he traces Darwin's troubles to the loss of his mother, who died when he was eight, and to the family's pattern of suppressing discussion of grief. Years later, when Darwin's father died, the whole family of adult children—Charles, his brother, and his four sisters—reacted to their bereavement by getting sick. Darwin's work was usually well received, his marriage was happy, his children were rewarding, his friendships were lasting, and he always had enough money. In recounting all this, Bowlby meticulously notes the occasions of stress or anxiety that produced Darwin's physical symptoms, and reminds us that he really suffered. Yet somehow this well-written biography doesn't work as its sympathetic, learned author intended, and Darwin's unconscious resort to illness seems an eccentricity—comic rather than tragic, and peripheral to his character and achievement.

A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture, by Samuel Hynes (Atheneum; $29.95). A close study of the 1914-18 war, less as the great political and military event of its time than as an overpowering "imaginative" event, which radically altered the ways the British thought about their lives, their culture and its artistic and philosophical expressions, and the world around them. Mr. Hynes focusses on the arts and how they reflected what he calls the "gap in history" that was the First World War: the rude discontinuity between a comfortable prewar set of beliefs and ideals (and illusions), and the embitterment, cynicism, and despair that resulted from the experience of war. His discussions of the war poets—Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves—the painters, the monument-makers, and the novelists (who, surprisingly, did not make significant contributions until nearly ten years after the fighting stopped) are full of original insights. He gives particular attention to Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, and D. H. Lawrence, who, more than others, assimilated the war into their writing, and articulated the postwar version of history as discontinuous and fragmented.

The Rituals of Dinner, by Margaret Visser (Grove Weidenfeld; $22.95). Mrs. Visser here continues the examination of our first biological imperative which she began with such spirit in "Much Depends on Dinner." That often horrifying study considered the kind of food we eat. Now she discusses how we eat it, pointing out that a meal at a McDonald's or a Burger King is no less encased in rigid ritual than a meal at the grandest French or Chinese restaurant—or the last meal that Jesus shared with his disciples. Mrs. Visser takes for purposes of illustration a dinner party—a gathering of friends or associates or celebrators—and scrutinizes its culturally imposed components. There is invitation and acceptance, dress, the kind of table (or its equivalent in non-Western cultures) and seating, table settings and decorations (there was a time when flowers were considered rustic and vulgar), the sequence of courses, and the sitting down and the getting up. This is an illuminating approach to the history of mankind.

Note: "Counsel to the President: A Memoir," by Clark Clifford, with Richard Holbrooke, has been published by Random House ($25). Much of the text originally appeared in *The New Yorker.*

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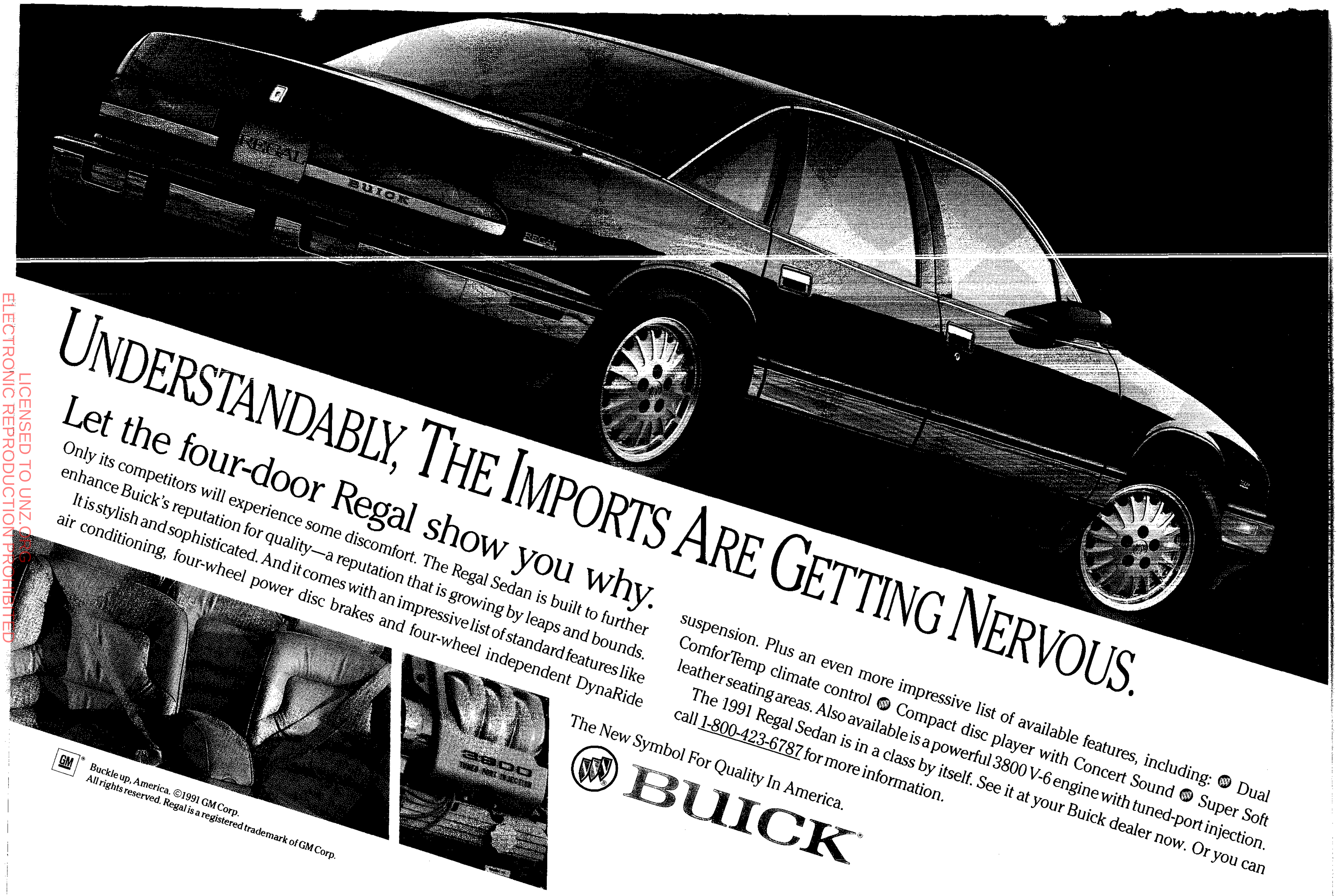

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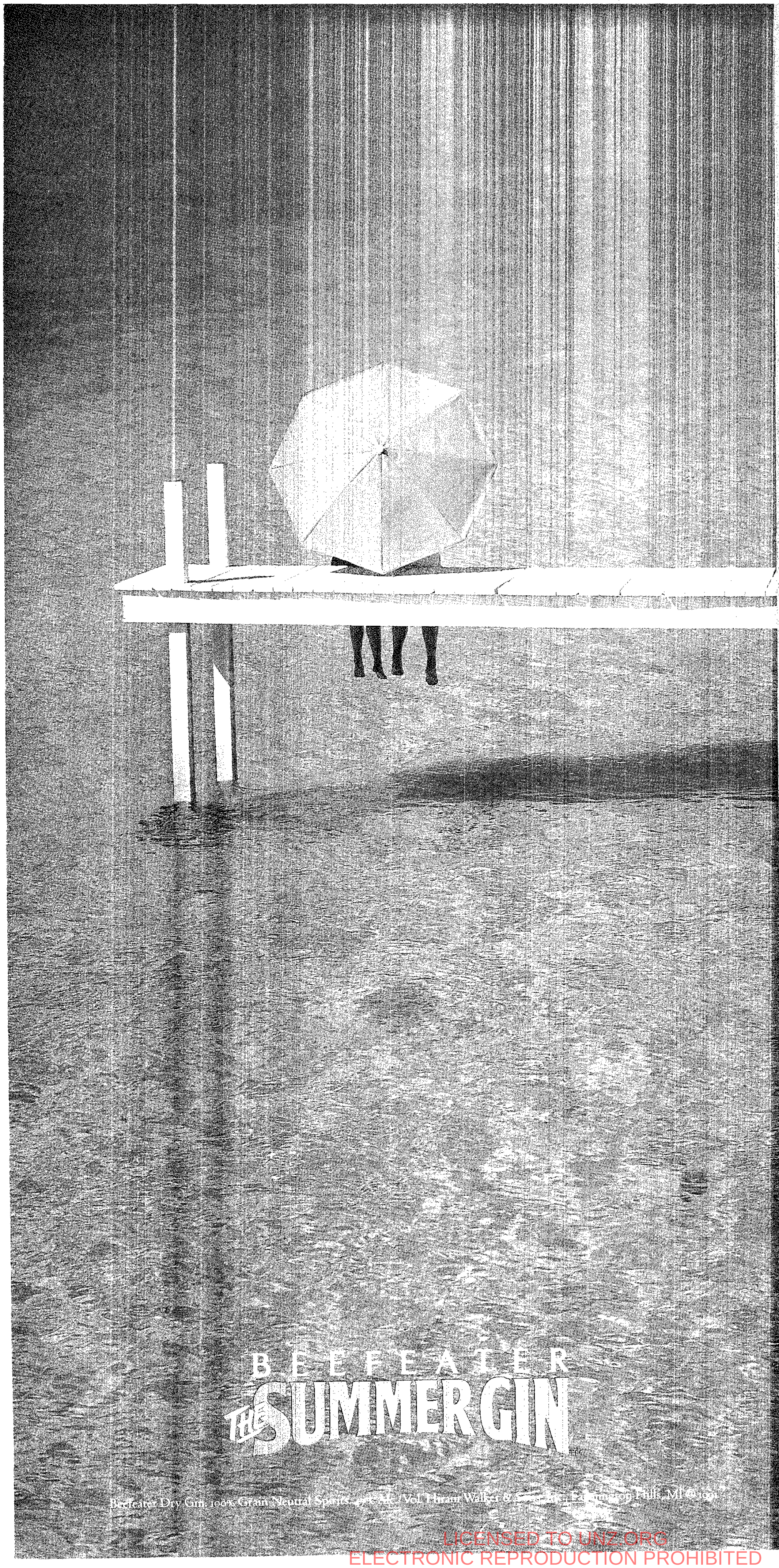
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